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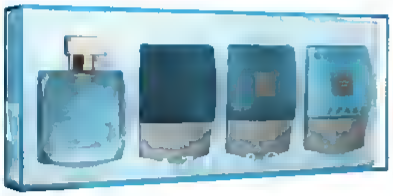


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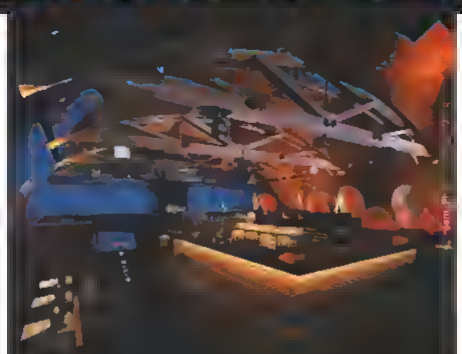
a guide to products for Esquire readers



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Jean Troillet's philosophy is simple: climb the highest summits without oxygen as rapidly as possible, with a minimum of equipment. And, when possible, take a route nobody's ever taken. Incredibly, this plan has taken him to the peaks of Everest, K2, Kanchenjunga, Lhotse and many of the world's other highest peaks. However, his zest for challenge is not limited to mountains. He's attempted to cross the Arctic Circle on skis pulled by reindeer. And he's proved himself a champion sailor. In Jean Troillet's own words: "You cannot be cured of a passion, you would like it to be contagious."



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ESQUIRE STYLE

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[188] **Areas of Detail** True personal style means getting the little things just right. Six key areas make all the difference.

[206] **Field Trip** This season's suits will keep you at your own best dressed—no matter where the day takes you.

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» Why I want to vote for Bush, and why I can't. [BY ANDREW SULLIVAN]
» The soul of America is at stake. [BY TIM LAHAYE]

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196 LAST TANGO IN CLEVELAND Esquire's resident tough guy challenges the reigning women's champ to three rounds in the ring. Sounds like fun, right? [BY SCOTT RAAB]

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214 THE HARD WAY A week in America's last great wilderness with the last of the deep-woods frontiersmen. [BY CHRISTOPHER MCDOUGALL]

COVER: Andre 3000. Paul Bettany, Javier Bardem and Matt Lauer photographed exclusively for Esquire by Norman Jean Roy. From left: Wool coat, vest, shirt, silk tie, and wool trousers by Ralph Lauren Purple Label. Wool suit and shirt, Polo by Ralph Lauren; silk tie by Ralph Lauren Purple Label. Wool suit, Polo by Ralph Lauren; shirt and silk tie by Ralph Lauren Purple Label. Wool suit and silk tie, Couture by Ermenegildo Zegna; shirt by Luigi Borrelli.

COVER: TAILORING BY CURTIS GARRETT. ASSISTANT STYLING FOR BARDEM BY MARCUS TEO FOR BE FACTO. GROOMING FOR ANDRE 3000 BY BARRY WHITE FOR BMW INC., FOR BETTANY AND BARDEM BY FABIOLA FOR THE WALL GROUP, AND FOR LAUER BY LORI FOR THE WALL GROUP.



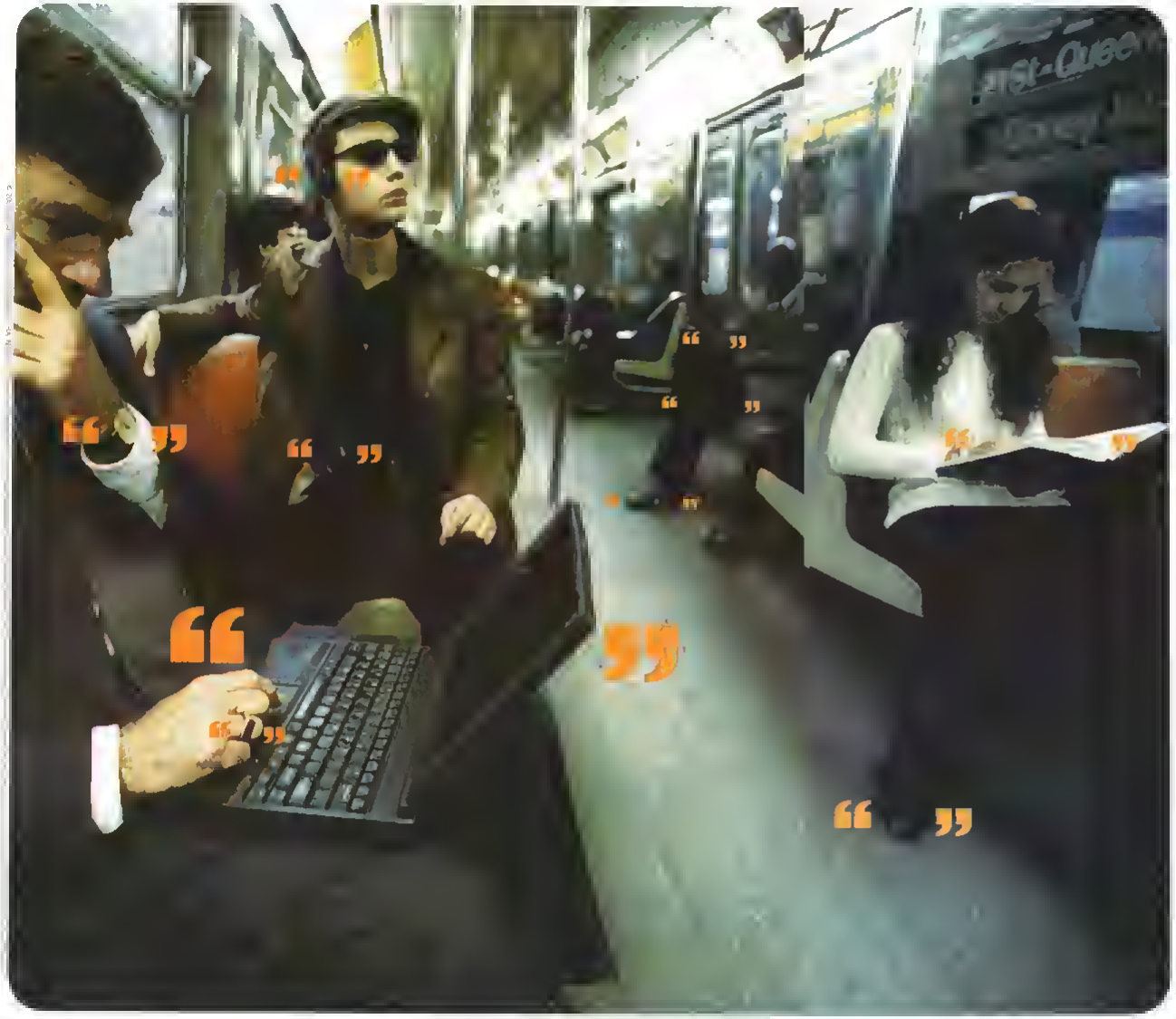


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Suits and coats that'll see you through any commute (*Field Trip * page 206)
Wool herringbone overcoat ($495) three-button wool-flannel pinstripe suit ($595) and cotton shirt ($95) by H Hilfiger silk tie ($40) by Tommy Hilfiger

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65 Man at His Best Anna Friel works blue, restaurant advice for the G.O.P., six good books, two breakthrough albums, one meaty wine, and the steak to go with it. Plus, Barry Sonnenfeld navigates the new GPS landscape, and Answer Fella on the world's remaining monarchs.

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128 TEN THINGS YOU DON'T KNOW ABOUT WOMEN Their most neglected erogenous zone and what they want from you. [BY MARISKA HARGITAY]

130 THE GAME The man who makes the bats that Barry Bonds is using to make history [BY CHRIS JONES]

136 THE INDUSTRY The ugly secret of Michael Eisner's staying power [BY KIM MASTERS]

142 SEX The truth about aphrodisiacs the downside of playing with yourself and etiquette for the well-endowed [BY STACEY GRENROCK WOODS]

144 THE RESTLESS MAN Go climb a tree. A very big tree [BY JAMES VLAHOS]

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152 FICTION What you should imagine when you imagine torture [BY NICHOLAS MONTEMARANO]

230 THIS WAY OUT Travel Tips for Turbulent Times [BY DANIEL ADEL]

More things a man should know about style money women culture
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Style

Cooler weather is a style opportunity. Layer your favorite pieces for a look that's sharp, comfortable, and endlessly wearable. Plus, the extra 10 percent: distinctive things to top it all off **(The Guide, page 105)**. A ten-item wish list for the man of style, from a classic aviator's wristwatch to a piece of pure automotive art **(The Esquire Catalog: The Essentials, page 110)**.

PHOTOGRAPH BY GREG MILLER

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The Sound and the Fury



CYCLING'S MOST FAMOUS FACE, Lance Armstrong, headlined our survival-themed July issue, as we captured images of his grueling training regimen. Inside, Robert Kurson followed the dangerous deep-sea identification of a mysterious sunken U-boat ("Sub"), Chris Jones revealed the forced solitude of three astronauts suddenly left stranded in space ("Home"), and Bucky McMahon subjected himself to sanity-stretching isolation on the Atlantic ("Adrift"). Also, we got a group of badass explorers out of their parkas and into some haute couture for a style feature ("Ten Tough Bastards").

What an outstanding issue. I generally read each issue cover to cover, but I read this one more quickly than normal. All of the stories were interesting, but the photo essay on Lance Armstrong and the story about getting our astronauts back to earth after the space shuttle exploded were gripping.

MARK MCCONNELL
Bellaire, Tex.

I have two new bruises just above my knees. They were caused by the weight of my elbows. I received these bruises as a direct result of Chris Jones's article, "Home." I just couldn't stop reading. It was one of the best, if not *the* best, articles I have ever read. I'm stuck with only one question: What was more brilliant, the astronauts' survival story or the words and sentences used to describe it?

JOSEPH CONRAD
Santa Monica, Calif.

I was thrilled to see Lance Armstrong on the cover and eager to read what was inside, only to be shocked to find a flimsy, big-print pictorial. This is how you showcase the man who may be "the greatest athlete of all time"? This is what you call "an unprecedented view"? Why not an interview with Lance? Or how about even one paragraph about why, seven years ago, "he was a dead man"? Or how he then went on to win five straight Tours?

I want to be reminded why Lance is a shining example of Man at His Best. I'm not inspired by a glossy picture of his calves.

ERIC JOHNSON
Westport, Conn.

Kurson did an excellent job of dramatically telling a riveting tale in "Sub" but seemed to have dropped the ball at the end. No explanation is given for how the divers ultimately traced the identity of the sub and the owner of the knife. Were some paragraphs inadvertently left out?

GREGG COLLE
Orangeburg, S.C.

EDITOR'S NOTE: *If by "some" paragraphs you mean thousands, yes. And it was on purpose. Kurson's article was an adaptation of his new book,* Shadow Divers *(Random House), which contains the rest of the tale. But don't feel bad; you weren't the only reader who missed the note.*

FATHER-FREE ZONE

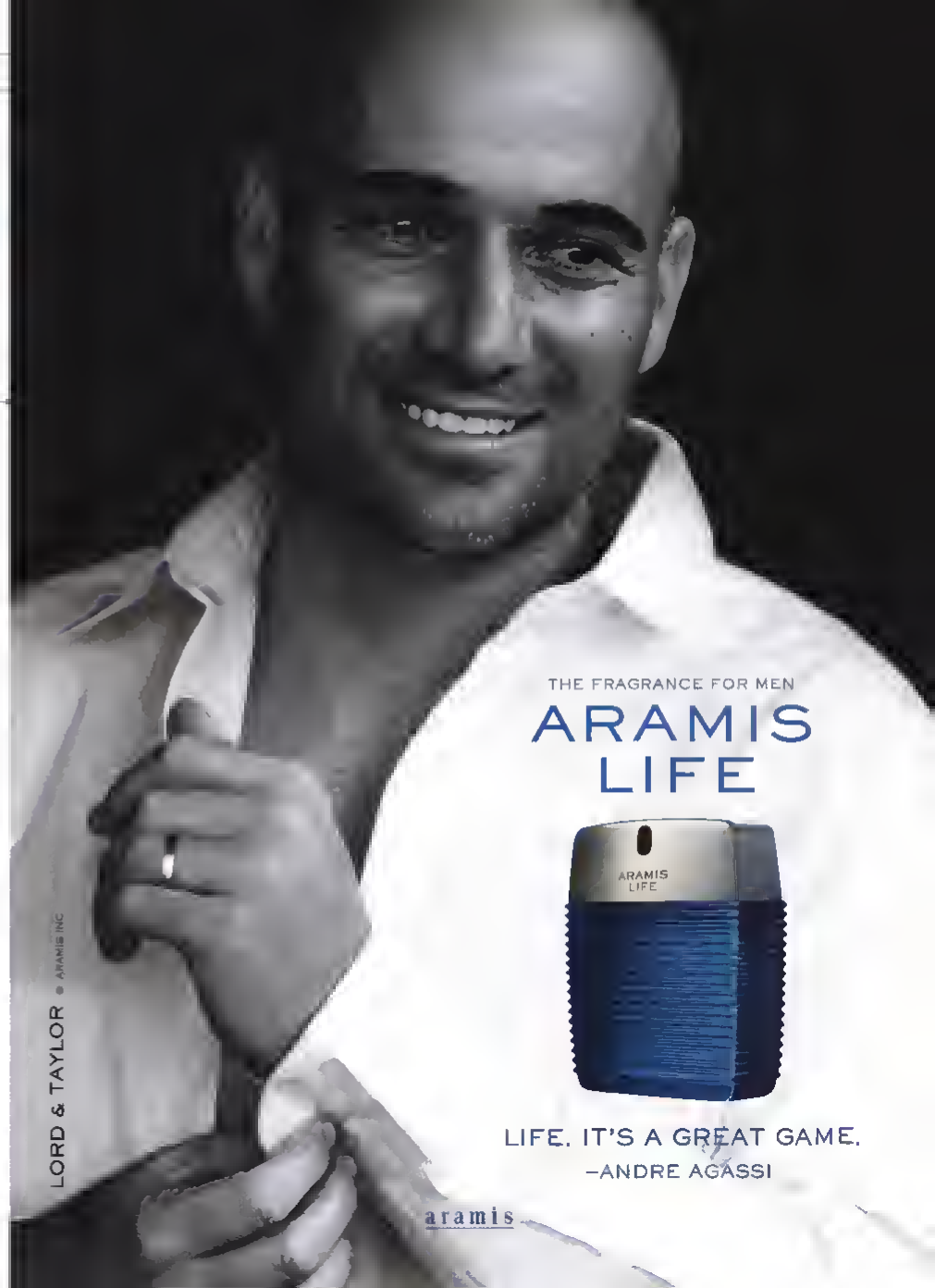
An Indefensible Position advocating that dads be relieved of their delivery-room obligation got some surprisingly mixed female response (Man at His Best, July)

I am in full agreement. Unless a man has a profound urge to witness his child's birth (and many do), get the hell outta there! The last thing I would want my husband or

The Women You Love Survey

Who's the sexiest Bush daughter? The hottest reality-show babe? The loveliest Democrat? The prettiest Republican? Your favorite female news anchor? Movie star? Felon? And the most beautiful woman on the planet?

Answer these pressing questions—and many more—at **Esquire.com** today. We'll publish the results in our annual **Women We Love** issue in November.



boyfriend to see is the disgusting, painful process that is giving birth. Let's revert back to the ol' pacing in the waiting room with cigars and irritating family members.

JULIA BETZEN
Littleton, Colo.

You need to suck it up. If having kids is so important to you, realize that the *entire* process involves more than sperm donation. It's not like you're asking a woman to put a pizza in the oven and call you when it's done.

MONI MAE
Jersey City, N.J.

REHABBING MUSIC

In July's music section (Man at His Best), columnist Andy Langer provoked the ire of sensitive Wilco fans when he poked fun at lead singer Jeff Tweedy, and cultural advisor John Mayer offered suggestions to industry executives desperately looking for some fresh ideas.

I understand your need to take critical darlings down a peg—in this case Wilco. But why take a cheap shot at someone who's seeking treatment for misuse of painkillers for chronic migraines? Tweedy hardly fits the hotel-destroying stereotype, and I'm sure what he's going through is not as fun as snorting the dust from your advance copy of *A Ghost Is Born*, as you suggest. I enjoy the music reviews, let's stick with those and check the gossip at the door.

ROB SCHNIEDERS
Chicago, Ill.

Can I get an amen! Mayer hit the nail on the head with this one. If more artists put out something that was worth fifteen-plus dollars rather than one good song and a bunch of crap, maybe there would be less downloading going on. And maybe if the music industry spent less time suing people and more listening to what consumers want, we would get somewhere.

HOLLY RICE
Las Vegas, Nev.

MISOGYNY AND LOAFERS

Answer Fella stood up for men everywhere in July (Man at His Best) when he counseled a reader to ignore his wife's sartorial harping.

Hey, AF. I like your advice generally, but don't you think you might be awfully misogynistic, referring to a guy's wife as a shrew and ball breaker merely for saying "you're not fifty yet"? It's 2004. We're gradually shedding our Neanderthal attitudes without losing our male identity. I'm fifty, and my wife gives me fashion advice often. Thank God, otherwise I'd look more like a goombah than I care to admit.

CHRIS HURN
Santa Fe Springs, Calif.

ANSWER FELLA RESPONDS. *Chris, Chris, Chris. The "guy" who asked for help was a) a librarian and b) twenty-nine years old. Fact A suggests that he's not quite a man in full to begin with; fact B indicates that his wife is well aware of fact A and willing to wield the scalpel of sarcasm to cut his vestigial nuts. You may be a contented old gelding, but this poor lad deserves his chance to gallop with the stallions, however briefly. And our culture has reached a sorry pass when referring to a gal as a shrew and a ball breaker brings the label of misogyny. AF digs chicks almost as much as he digs overstatement.*

BRIDGING THE GAP

Months after military strategist Thomas P.M. Barnett offered foreign-policy advice to George W. Bush ("Mr. President, Here's How to Make Sense of Our Iraq Strategy," June), the letters keep coming in.

The "Gap/Core" theory is a sick delineation of the globe that makes no exception to the might-makes-right rule. I'm all too afraid that Bush may subscribe to this theory (once it's explained with pretty pictures and a patient advisor) and go on a rampage to boost his re-election chances under the guise of bringing the world into the "Core." I think I may move to Canada.

DAVID KASOAN
Las Vegas, Nev.

Perhaps Barnett should have started with an explanation of why increased globalization is a positive goal. This might have prevented his views from being rejected up front by readers who don't view increased multinational corporate power as being a goal worthy of even nonmilitary effort.

STEVE PERKINS
Duluth, Ga.

Barnett was able to capture the way many people in support of the war feel but are not eloquent or educated enough to articulate. As a member of the military, I find it refreshing to see something other than Bush-bashing stories. While I'm not necessarily in favor of everything the president does, he certainly does not deserve the constant attacks he seems to receive from the media. You have earned my respect and praise for breaking the one-sided mold that so much of the media falls into.

CDT ADAM LYNCH
West Point, N.Y.

Letters to the editor may be mailed to The Sound and the Fury, Esquire, P.O. Box 1704, Sandusky, Ohio 44870. Also, Esquire encourages the use of fax (212-649-4305) and e-mail (to esquire@hearst.com or via the Web at esquire.com/talk). Include your full name, address, and daytime phone number. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

INMATE LETTER OF THE MONTH

Arts, Crafts, and Sodomy

Asked if white-collar criminals truly serve "hard" time, Answer Fella responded with bad news for Martha Stewart (Man at His Best, July). We received a firsthand rebuttal, however, that offers a more positive outlook.

I must disagree with Answer Fella's interpretation of how white-collar criminals are treated. For your information, there is no "hole." There is now what is appropriately termed "the box"—a large cell with an attached rec pen (the "terrace") and private shower where three meals are delivered, along with library books and commissary supplies. We don't have to go anywhere. Breakfast in bed and long novels are quite relaxing.

We also have basketball, racquetball, softball (with bats), fully equipped modern gyms, cable TV inside and outside, arts and crafts. Some facilities even have ski slopes, bowling alleys, pool tables.

It's more like camp—except there's no girls' camp across the lake.

MICHAEL STONE
UPSTATE CORRECTIONAL FACILITY
Malone, N.Y.






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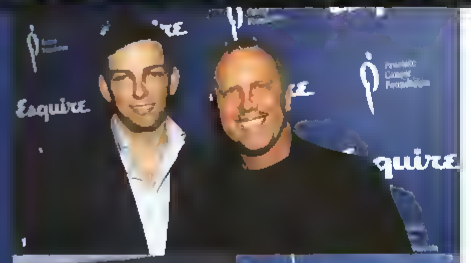
On May 12, Esquire Editor in Chief David Granger, Esquire Publisher Kevin C. O'Malley hosted a welcoming party for Esquire's new Fashion Director Nick Sullivan at the ultra posh Hotel Gansevoort in New York City

The fashion event drew a who's who of fashion designers and fashion executives to the penthouse rooftop of the newly opened hotel. At the event, famed DJ duo Thievery Corporation spun vinyl from their newly released CD and mixed sounds for over 400 guests,

Each of the three bars featured exclusive sponsored spirits, Wet by Beefeater, Beefeater Gin, Stolichnaya Vodka and Maker's Mark.

In addition, one of the featured bars offered guests a special cocktail entitled 'Blue for Men' signature cocktail, which symbolized the newly formed alliance between Esquire Magazine and the Prostate Cancer Foundation.

The "Blue for Men" campaign, a program that looks to raise awareness about Prostate Cancer and its effects, encourages men to purchase and wear blue merchandise during the month of September, which has been named Prostate Cancer Awareness Month











1. Esquire's Nick Sullivan and Designer Michael Kors. **2.** Polo Ralph Lauren Executive David Lauren and Esquire Editor In Chief David Granger. **3.** Esquire Associate Publisher/Marketing Stephen Jacoby and Designer Thom Browne. **4.** DJ sensation's Thievery Corporation **5.** Exclusive spirit sponsors of the event were Beefeater, Wet by Beefeater Stolichnaya Vodka and Maker's Mark. **6.** Hearst EVP/ Chief Marketing Officer/Publishing Director Michael A. Clinton, Hearst Magazine Division President Cathleen P. Black and Donny Deutsch, Advertising Executive. **7.** Esquire's Nick Sullivan, N.Y Times columnist Stuart Elliott, and Esquire Publisher Kevin C. O'Malley.

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{Editor's Letter}



Crunch Time

I'VE BEEN THINKING a lot about President Bush these days. It's commonplace to hear people say that he's the most divisive, polarizing president we've known. But this is the first time in my life that a president has managed to forestall the possibility of discussion. Either you're in the Bush camp or you're not. At parties, at family reunions, on the golf course, once someone starts talking politics, you just have to shut up. Whether you vigorously agree or vehemently disagree, there's just no point in engaging. Positions have hardened, and we've heard every iteration of them before. Discussion leads not toward an exchange of ideas; no, talking about the president among acquaintances or with the extended family leads nowhere but to a drink in the face and upsetting your mom.

As you're reading this issue, the Dems will have just finished up their convention and, if the prognosticators are right, Kerry-Edwards will be enjoying a short-term bounce in the polls. But I just can't make myself believe that the election is going to have all that much to do with the Democratic ticket. It seems to me that we're going to be voting for or against George W. Bush.

Given this political atmosphere, we've been looking for interesting and unexpected perspectives on the election. Last month, writer at large Tom Junod, no fan of President Bush, made the case for a second Bush term. This month, beginning on page 174, we asked three prominent conservative thinkers, all of whom would normally be presumed to support a Republican president under any circumstances, to consider a second Bush presidency. For two of the three, advocating a second term is a struggle.

As a kind of counterpoint, we also asked one of our occasional contributors, who happens to be the son of the most popular Republican president of the twentieth century, to assess President Bush. Over the several months since we first asked Ron Reagan to write about the president, and especially during the extended memorial that followed his father's death, Ron watched as Bush worked hard to lay claim to being the heir to the Reagan throne. Ron's perspective on his father's legacy and his criticism of the way the president is doing his job are the fascinating foundation of his piece, "The Case Against George W. Bush," which appears on page 180.

IT HAS TO HAVE BEEN at least seven or eight years ago that Scott Raab started talking about fighting a woman. It was around the dawn of professional boxing for women, and we were out to dinner somewhere, and somehow we started talking about Christy Martin. Scott, who is an unnaturally strong man, was pretty sure that even without any boxing experience, he could hold his own, maybe do a little damage. Vigorous debate ensued.

The idea would bubble up on occasion over the years but didn't see fruition until late this past May, on a steamy night in a boxing gym in the basement of a vocational school in Cleveland. I'd met Ann Wolfe that afternoon in the lobby of our hotel, and I immediately began to wonder what Scott had gotten himself into. Wolfe is a very soft-spoken, gentle-seeming woman. But her guns tell a different story. The biceps that her sleeveless shirt revealed were as daunting an indicator of what was going to happen to Scott as can be imagined.

It's always amazing to see boxing from a front-row seat. As beautiful and brutal as it is on television, when you're sitting ringside and you witness two people willingly step into a ring where they have agreed to attempt to do damage to each other, it's primal.

The night began with five preliminary bouts. The prelims featured young men who train at Kronk Gym in Cleveland, ranging in age from ten to early twenties, and even with the little kids, we could see how serious an enterprise this was. You could hear and feel the contact. You cringed when a heavy shot landed.

That was especially true as Scott stepped into the ring. As lightly as I had sometimes taken Scott's quest to fight a woman—and this was not just any female boxer; Wolfe currently owns titles in four weight classes—now it was daunting. Now it was a professional athlete versus a mere mortal. Wolfe was unimaginably fast and unimaginably strong. Early in the first round, she landed a left, hard, on Scott's headgear, and I began to wonder if she could understand how vulnerable a civilian—even a big, strong civilian—is. Years ago, I played Andre Agassi in tennis, and the lasting lesson I took from it was not only that I—who have played tennis my whole life—was helpless on the court with him, but also that he could hurt me if he wanted to. I flashed to that as I watched Scott put himself in true mortal peril.

Scott stood up for three long rounds. He landed some punches. He did us proud in an arena that is as foreign to him as can be. And then he wrote a funny and beautiful story ("Last Tango in Cleveland," page 196) about his experience—not just about his three rounds with a world champion but about the hope and beauty that inhabit the most brutal of sports.

—David Granger

GEOFFREY BEENE



PHOTOGRAPH BY NORMAN JEAN ROY

Contributors



"Fashion isn't about clothes making a man," says Esquire's new fashion director, **NICK SULLIVAN** (near right). "It's about finding your own way to dress and making it work." So when Sullivan and senior fashion editor **WENDELL BROWN** set out to find the best dressed men in the world for this month's style issue (see page 165), they looked for men whose sense of style stems from an expression of individuality rather than simply designer labels. "It's very easy to come up with lots of predictable names, people who are sort of famous for being famous, or stylish because they're famous," explains Sullivan, who before arriving at Esquire was an associate editor at British *GQ*. "But there is a lot more to being stylish than putting on a tie." Adds Brown, "Fashion isn't about having one way to look but knowing what type of guy you are and putting together a look that works for you." This philosophy underlies Sullivan's mission as fashion director. "I see Esquire's fashion team as a filter. It's up to us to make sure guys are wearing quality stuff that is right for them rather than stuff that will be out by Thursday lunchtime."



A little more than a year after making his Esquire debut with his essay "My Father's Memories" (June 2003), **RON REAGAN** returns with "The Case Against George W. Bush" (page 180). While Reagan, a correspondent for Animal Planet and a contributor to MSNBC, recognizes the potency of someone named Reagan being so openly critical of someone named Bush, he downplays the family connections. "To me, it just seems like common sense. Any rational person could look at this administration and draw the same conclusions. My name and my position really have nothing to do with it," says Reagan. "I don't think people should be comfortable with an administration that is dishonest with the American public. They don't trust us, and therefore we shouldn't trust them."



When writer **CHRISTOPHER McDOUGALL** first heard about Patrick Brown, a lone woodsman living a Natty Bumppo existence in the Idaho wilderness, he thought he was being spun tall tales about Paul Bunyan. Speaking with him by phone "was like getting radio contact from the nineteenth century," says McDougall. "He just kept telling me one story after another." A frequent contributor and author of the upcoming book *Girl Trouble* (out in November from Rayo), McDougall followed Brown into the wilderness to write "The Herd Way" (page 214). He emerged with a key lesson in self-sufficiency: "If you don't really teach yourself how to do things, you're incubating a disease within yourself," Brown told him. "You're creating your own cancer."



Fiction writer **NICHOLAS MONTEMARANO** makes his Esquire debut this month with "The November Fifteen" (page 152), a story as eerily prescient as it is harrowing. Montemarano began his Kafkaesque account of torment two years ago, after witnessing what he describes as the "appropriation of collective grief" during the first anniversary of September 11. Meanwhile, a book he'd been reading about the prevalence of unreported torture triggered the context. Winner of a Pushcart Prize and a National Endowment for the Arts fellowship, Montemarano teaches creative writing at Franklin & Marshall College in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. "The November Fifteen" will be included in an upcoming book of short stories about grief.



In search of a model for "Field Trip" (page 205), one of this month's style features, photographer **GREG MILLER** settled on a familiar face: his agent of five years, Julien Richards. Beyond his striking looks, Richards's understanding of Miller's work and his experience in the industry proved an invaluable asset to the remarkable shoot. "He was the best model I've ever photographed," says Miller. "I don't think anybody else has had such a connection to everything working." In recent years, Miller has become accustomed to shooting primarily with an eight-by-ten oversized camera. "I do a lot of pictures where I just grab people. When they see the camera, it's like having your picture made. Like you're the president. I think a big camera makes people stop in their tracks a bit."



SULLIVAN AND BROWN: NORMAN JEAN ROY



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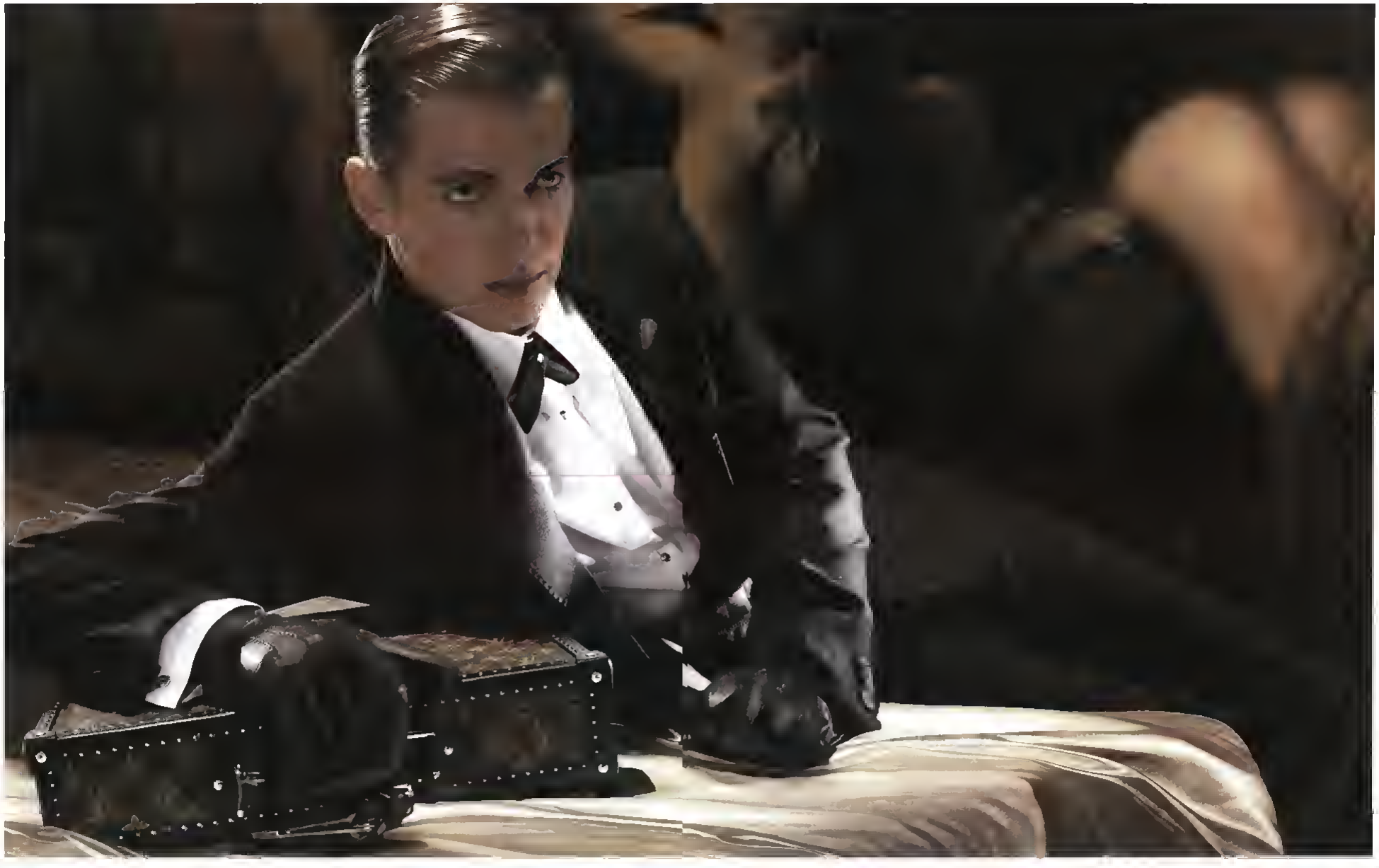


Funny Joke from a Beautiful Woman

As told by **ANNA FRIEL**

About the joke: Anna Friel wants you to know that she told Esquire a far dirtier joke, it involved a bottle of [illegible] and two "completely bollocks-naked" men. We couldn't print it, but we were impressed by the Pakistani accent she employed. If you want to hear her American accent (which she says makes her sound "a little bit wanky, like I'm a bit up myself"), tune in to Fox's struggling *The Jury* (still hanging on as of press time). Though this is her first U.S. series, Friel is a TV veteran on the other side of the Atlantic. At 17, she gave Britain its first-ever on-screen lesbian kiss [illegible] star of the [illegible] opera *Brookside*. [illegible] get lots of nice [illegible] pretty girls." Up [illegible] the 28-year-old's the movie *Perfect* [illegible] in which she does [illegible] "snogging" with [illegible]
—PENN [illegible]

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{The Awards}

The SEVEN Most Remarkable Things in Culture This Month



• Clockwise from far left, Kevin James and Leah Remini on *The King of Queens*; John Goodman and Jean Smart on *Center of the Universe*; and Mark Addy and Jami Gertz on *Still Standing*

MAHB

1 Least Believable Trend

Fat guys and their hot wives on CBS

2 Most Pre-s ier r

"Mushroom [*mauscheron* French]: An upstart; a wretch risen from the dung hill; a director of a company."

—From *Samuel Johnson's Insults: A Compendium of Snubs, Sneers, Slights, and Effrontenes from the Eighteenth-Century Master*, edited by Jack Lynch

3 Cruelest Line

"Its head bobs just like yours, Nana."

—Betsy, a character on CBS's new baseball-oriented show *Clubhouse*, upon presenting her ancient grandmother with a bobble-head doll

4 Best Etymology

"When taking an oath, our biblical ancestors would place their hands over the testicles of a witness to indicate their sincerity and honesty. Words like 'testify' and 'testament' all derive from this unique association."

—From *The Penis Book*, by Joseph Cohen

5 Craziest Horse Talk

"When I'm riding alone through the woods on a beautiful day, I look up at the sky and say, 'God, it's a good day to die.'"

—Morgan Freeman, as quoted in *People Who Know Horses They Love*, by Jill Rappaport and Wendy Wilkinson

6 Best Internal Monologue

"You petulant son of a bitch. Just make love to your wife and have a lobster."

—From *We Don't Live Here Anymore*, starring Mark Ruffalo as the petulant SOB and Laura Dern as the wife

7 M st Dis ase

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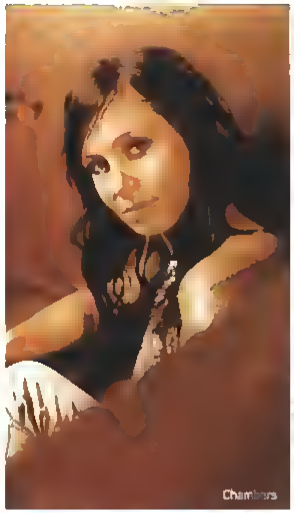
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Music

[BY ANDY LANGER]


Chambers


Merritt

Two Tough Broads With career-defining albums out this month, Kasey Chambers and Tift Merritt are about to crash the gates of music's boys' club

ALMOST TEN YEARS AGO, as a way to explain the racial split over O. J., a study of TV ratings famously revealed that of the top ten television shows among blacks and whites, only *Monday Night Football* was on both lists. Do that kind of poll today, asking men and women to name their favorite musicians, and I'm not sure they'd have a single favorite female musician in common. That's because men want the impossible—an equal mix of danger, vulnerability, and Lucinda Williams if she looked like Gwen Stefani. But we rarely get it. That could change, though, thanks to Kasey Chambers and Tift Merritt—two hot songbirds releasing career-defining records capable of kicking men where it counts.

Kasey Chambers grew up in Australia idolizing Lucinda Williams, but rather than adopting Lucinda's gravelly vocals, she squeaks like Nikes on linoleum. It charms beautifully, but more endearing is her unprocessed outback twang, which makes Dolly Parton sound like Fran Drescher. Her third (latest, and best) album, *Wayward Angel*, is a good ol' fashioned mood record, heavy on meaty, slow-burn ballads that run through cycles of salvation, regret, and self-deprecation. But don't confuse slow for boring; heartbreakers like the title track are more dangerous than Liz Phair applying twice the pep and four times the fashion allowance. And in a stunning dash of role play, Chambers borrows the mournful voice of an elderly widower on the set's sparse voice-and-piano centerpiece, "Paper Aeroplane."

A modern chanteuse capable of giving Chambers a run for her money is her North Carolina counterpart, **Tift Merritt**. She's earned a sterling reputation for making delicate lullabies look easy with brawny, smooth vocals. With her sophomore set, *Tambourine*, Merritt trades in bedtime tunes for stay-out-all-night rockers, busting out of the alt-country ghetto with a self-described "rock-soul throw down." She shakes her moneymaker across Stax-style R&B tunes complete with slinky horns and sultry background singers. If you're picturing Dusty Springfield fronting Creedence Clearwater Revival, you're right, although the record's most soulful moments add up to an unintentional but wonderful Ray Charles memorial.

What's made Aretha Franklin's and Tina Turner's finest moments memorable has more to do with powerful performances than gender. Decades later, Tift Merritt and Kasey Chambers have turned in two similarly exceptional ear openers. Rock 'n' roll may always be a boys' club, but these two girls more than deserve the gate keys.

MUSIC LESSONS with John Mayer

THIS MONTH'S LESSON: SEARCH AND RECOVERY



THERE'S GOOD MUSIC, and then there's music you like. For me, Teitur's ***Poetry & Aeroplanes*** goes two for two. The album was released in July of last year, and by record-industry standards, it's dead. Buying this disc now qualifies as search and recovery, not rescue. The problem with watching it get smaller and smaller in my rearview mirror is that it may be one of the best albums to come around in the last five years.

Teitur is Teitur Lassen, a 27-year-old singer-songwriter from Denmark's Faroe Islands (population 45,000). He's utterly melodic and hopelessly romantic, and when he performs live, he robs the air from your lungs. Oh, and he's devoid of any charisma or star power whatsoever. The man could get asked for 10 at his own show. That fact, coupled with his record company's complete lack of vision for his career, has contributed to his warming the bench at Universal Records. But who cares about being charismatic? As far as I'm concerned, that criterion should never have been added to pop music's talent contest anyway.

If you have iTunes, spend 99 cents on the first track, "Sleeping with the Lights On." Listen to the mellow, off-kilter drum loop that sounds like a windshield wiper set one click above intermittent, and the cashmere-warm electric guitar melody completely in unison with his vocals. "Oh, I've been haunted by this old ghost before," he starts out before getting to the greatest gut punch of a lyric I've heard in a long time: "I feel like waking up in your house some day." If this tune doesn't do it for you, neither did David Gray's *White Ladder*, Coldplay's *A Rush of Blood to the Head*, or hell, even your own childhood.

Poetry & Aeroplanes is a concept record, really. It's about being in love but not being around. It's almost always raining, and if it's not, it's about to. Those windshield wipers almost never turn off. But that doesn't make it drab. It makes it feel safe inside, where it's dry, and the heat is blowing. Music like this is jet fuel on the fire of a broken heart. Even if you think the flame has died, there's at least one lyric that'll hit that last hot spot, and then you'll find yourself as fucked as you were the day you called and said you never wanted to see her again. Enjoy.


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(BY MIKE D'ANGELO)



■ Their naughty embrace in *Y Tu Mama También* made Mexico's Gael Garcia Bernal and Diego Luna national icons

The Two Amigos

Y Tu Mamá También gave Gael García Bernal and Diego Luna the same big break—with nearly opposite results

POP QUIZ HOTSHOT You are a young, boyishly handsome, vaguely effeminate Mexican actor. Your latest film, in which you play a callow hombre tooling around the countryside with his very best amigo and a sexy, accommodating older woman, has shattered box-office records at home and achieved proportional success abroad—the kind of numbers that make opportunistic Hollywood execs think crossover. The film's director has just been offered the third installment in the insanely lucrative Harry Potter franchise. It is slowly dawning on you that you stand at a critical juncture in what you are surprised to find yourself actually thinking of as your career. As one of Mexico's new It boys, you'll be in a position to cherry-pick the best Spanish-language roles and establish some impressive leading-hombre credentials. On the other hand, you can already smell the plush leather interior of the Carrera you'll be able to buy with your check from the new Spielberg flick, in which you've been offered the challenging role of Wacky Ethnic Sidekick #3. Integrity versus visibility. Craft versus dinero. What do you do?

Depends on who you are, it turns out. It's now been three years since *Y Tu Mamá También* put the men back in menage a trois, few moments in recent movies have rocked audiences like the one in which Julio and Tenoch, both undulating against the woman of their adolescent wet dreams, lean around her stunning naked form and start soul-kissing each other. And like test subjects in a controlled experiment, the film's talented and courageous stars, Gael García Bernal and Diego Luna, have set off on nearly antipodal career paths—one inspiring, the other dispiriting. (For those of you who can't recall offhand who was who, García Bernal was the floppy haired one with the soulful eyes and winning smile, whereas Luna was the floppy haired one with the watchful eyes and charming smirk.)

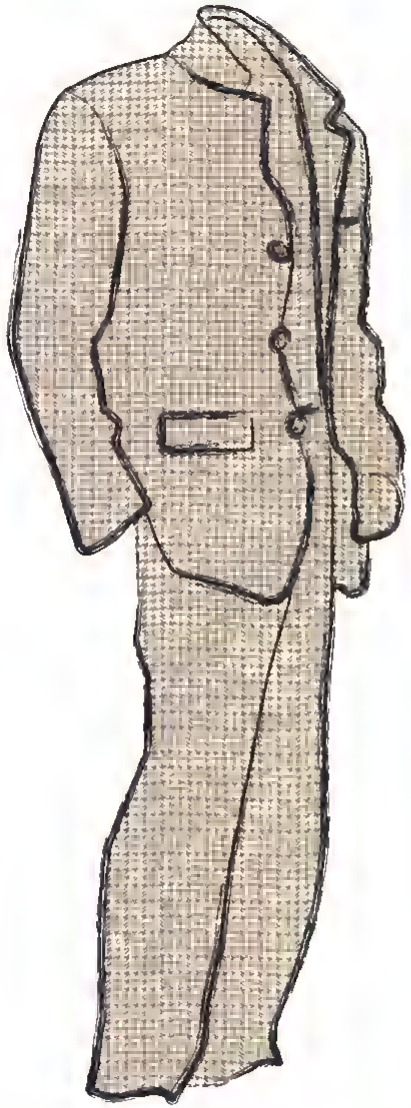
Of the two, García Bernal had the higher profile prior to *Y Tu Mamá*, having made an arresting debut in Alejandro González Iñárritu's *Amores Perros*. He's opted for the high road and he's not fucking around. Can you say Che? Opening this month *The Motorcycle Diaries*, directed by Walter Salles (*Central Station*), follows the young Ernesto Guevara, then a privileged med student no less cheerfully self-absorbed than the rest of us, as he and a buddy journey about 8,000 miles from Buenos Aires to Lima, encountering a variety of conscience-jarring locals en route. The film was faithfully adapted from Guevara's own account of the period (some of it contemporaneous, other bits retroactively revised) and purports to depict the slow yet seismic evolution of a revolutionary, at times, you can almost see the fault line widening behind Che's eyes.

For all its scrupulous compassion and vivid location work, *The Motorcycle Diaries* is a bit of a snooze. Salles works so strenuously to avoid self-conscious mythmaking—a laudable goal—that he allows the movie's rhythm to become plodding and cozily anecdotal, the growing urgency in García Bernal's performance isn't echoed by the filmmaking. But it's remarkable nonetheless to watch the shrewdness with which the actor conveys Guevara's gradual transformation. There's no eureka moment, no epiphany—just a series of psychic gearshifts that manifest themselves in the character's carriage and tone of voice. Even at the climax, as a disgusted Ernesto swims across the river separating [*continued on page 88*]

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celluloid style™

2004 film competition

In January of 2004, Esquire announced the launch of Celluloid Style, a film competition created to champion the work of talented student filmmakers from the East and West coasts

Throughout the following pages you will meet those filmmakers selected to participate These students seized our challenge and translated Esquire stories for the big screen Our panels of film industry judges chose this year's winners and runners up from each coast This month the selected films will be screened at private parties in New York and Los Angeles

east coast finalists

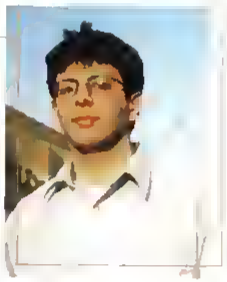


Matthew Bookman

Matthew graduated with honors from Tisch School of the Arts at New York University, where he majored in film. He has written two feature length scripts, as well as written and directed several short films including his senior thesis, *Russell Sweetwater in Heart of Gold*. Matthew currently lives in New York City and is working on a number of new projects.

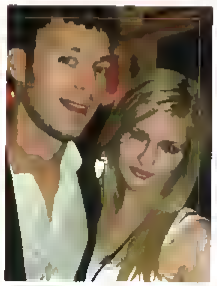
Film: *Presence*, based on the short story "Presence" by Arthur Miller

Dan Elortegui



Dan, a graduate of Tisch School of the Arts, wrote and directed *Public Difficulties*, which won NYU's Color Sync Festival. He also wrote and directed the short film *Billy and the Kid*, a modernized Western that received Warner Bros. Pictures' prestigious Film Production Award. Dan is currently at work on a feature-length version of the film.

Film: *Norman*, based on "Old" by Mike Sager



Zack Sherman

Zack is a seasoned television, film and DVD producer. He produced the New York content for *Hip-Hop Nation: Notes from the Underground*, which was shown in over 90 television markets. He went on to produce the short film *Blue Boy*, working alongside writer and director Skylar James.

Skylar James

Skylar studied film and television at Tisch School of the Arts, where she wrote and directed *Blue Boy*. The short film earned distinguished grants and awards, and was presented at numerous film festivals, including WorldFest-Houston.

Film: *Adieu*, based on "The Last Meal" by Michael Paterniti

semi-finalists

Andrei Severny



David Karlsberg



Jacob Jaffke



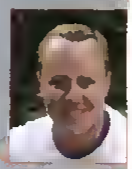
Julian Renner



Oden Roberts

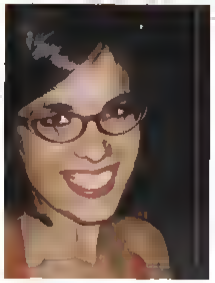


Ron Davis





west coast finalists



Eva Husson

Eva received her MFA in directing from the American Film Institute in Los Angeles. Her short film *Hope to Die*, was nominated for both a Student Academy Award and Student ASC Award. It was also featured in the Short Film Corner at the 2004 Cannes Film Festival, and was an official selection in this year's Tribeca and CineVegas film festivals. She is currently working on three feature-length scripts: *Hopefully, Love, Tiny Dancer*; and *Limbo*.

Film: *200 x 1* based on The Falling Man, by Tom Junod



Peter Livolsi

Peter recently completed his first year as a directing fellow at the American Film Institute Conservatory. During his undergraduate studies, he worked as an assistant to producer Trevor Albert at Twentieth Century Fox, most recently completing *The League of Extraordinary Gentleman*, starring Sean Connery.

Film: *Last Meals Inc.* based on "The Last Meal" by Michael Paterniti



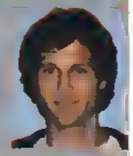
Alonso F. Mayo

Alonso studied film and journalism at the University of Lima in Peru. He wrote and directed the screenplay *Wednesday Afternoon*, and his short film *Silencio* has been presented in Latino film festivals around the world, winning the Robert Altman prize in the Kansas City Filmmakers Jubilee. Alonso was recently awarded a Diversity Award from the Multicultural Motion Picture Association. He is currently completing his MFA in film directing at the American Film Institute Conservatory.

Film: *Anyone* based on The Falling Man, by Tom Junod

semi-finalists

Adam Penn



Bradley Buecker



Christine Kelley



Graham Tallman



Kevin Ackerman



Mike Miley



Sharat Raju



altoids.com



east coast panel of judges

Five of the movie industry's top executives, filmmakers, producers and critics voted for the best short films from the East coast.



Michael Barker

Michael Barker is the copresident and cofounder of Sony Pictures Classics, where recent releases include the Academy Award-winning films *Talk to Her* *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* and *Fog of War* Barker serves on the Entertainment Media and Technology Dean's Advisory Board at NYU's Stern School of Business He formerly served on the Independent Feature Project Board of Directors

Andrew Jarecki

Andrew Jarecki directed last year's critically acclaimed documentary *Capturing the Friedmans* The Academy Award-nominated film won the Grand Jury Prize at the 2003 Sundance Film Festival and the New York Film Critics Award, among other prizes Jarecki is the cofounder of Moviefone the leading telephone and online destination for movie information

Elvis Mitchell

Elvis Mitchell is an acclaimed critic, lecturer, writer and entertainment commentator for NPR's "Weekend Edition " Formerly a film critic for the *New York Times* and the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, Mitchell has won numerous honors including the AASFE Award for Excellence in Criticism His essays and reviews have appeared in *Rolling Stone*, *Vanity Fair* and *Esquire* magazines.

Christine Vachon

Christine Vachon is the cofounder of Killer Films The company's recent films include the Academy Award nominated *Far From Heaven*, the Academy Award-winning *Boys Don't Cry* and the upcoming *The Ballad of Bettie Page* Vachon has been honored by the New York Film Critics Circle and received producing awards from the National Board of Review and the Independent Features Project.

Bart Walker

Bart Walker is head of the motion-picture department for the New York office of ICM where he represents many accomplished writers, directors, and actors His clients recent films include Jim Jarmusch s *Coffee and Cigarettes*, Sofia Coppola's Academy Award winning *Lost in Translation*, Mira Nair's *Vanity Fair*, and the upcoming *Palindromes*, by Todd Solondz and *Romance and Cigarettes* by John Turturro

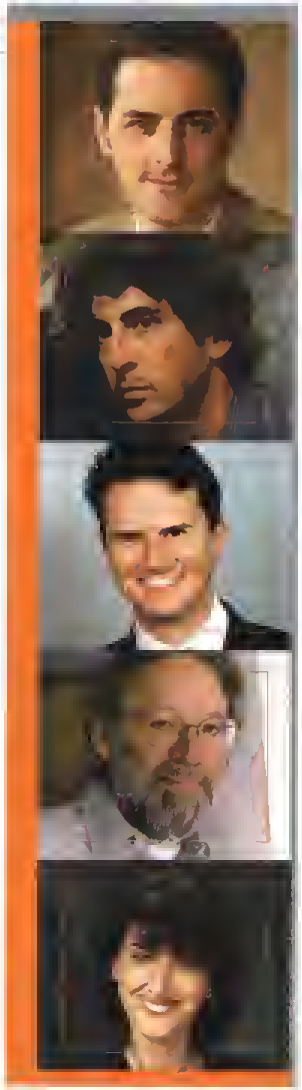
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west coast panel of judges

Five of the movie industry's top executives, filmmakers, producers and critics voted for the best short films from the West coast.



John Lesher

John Lesher is a partner at the talent agency Endeavor. Some of the clients he works with include Paul Thomas Anderson, Alejandro González Iñárritu, Fernando Meirelles, Aaron Sorkin, David O. Russell, Walter Salles, Martin Scorsese and Michael Winterbottom. Prior to joining Endeavor, Lesher was a partner at the United Talent Agency.

Alexander Payne

Alexander Payne cowrote and directed *Citizen Ruth* and the Academy Award-nominated films *Election*, starring Reese Witherspoon and Matthew Broderick, and *About Schmidt*, starring Jack Nicholson. *About Schmidt*, winner of two Golden Globe Awards, was voted best film of 2002 by the Los Angeles and London film critics circles. Payne's newest comedy, *Sideways*, will be released in October.

Peter Rice

Peter Rice is the president of Fox Searchlight Pictures. The studio's recent releases include *28 Days Later*, *Bend It Like Beckham*, and the Academy Award-nominated films *In America* and *Sexy Beast*. This year, Fox Searchlight will release films by David O. Russell, Alexander Payne, and Danny Boyle. Previously, Rice was the executive vice-president of production for Twentieth Century Fox.

Kenneth Turan

Kenneth Turan is a film critic for the *Los Angeles Times* and National Public Radio's "Morning Edition." He is also the director of the Los Angeles Times Book Prizes. He teaches film reviewing and nonfiction writing at the University of Southern California. Turan's book *Never Coming to a Theater Near You* will be published this fall.

Ruth Vitale

Ruth Vitale is the copresident of Paramount Classics, whose acclaimed releases include Sofia Coppola's *The Virgin Suicides*, Patrice Leconte's *Girl on a Bridge*, and the Academy Award-nominated *You Can Count On Me*. This month, Paramount Classics will release *The Machinist*, starring Christian Bale. Previously, Vitale was the president of Fine Line Features.

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[continued from page 76] the staff of a leper colony from its patients (care to guess in which direction?), there's still a sizable disjunction between the man onscreen and the legendary firebrand lurking inside our heads. Garcia Bernal respects proto-Che's embryonic state, but unlike Salles, he manages at the same time to capture something of his passion.

Passion, in varied and sometimes destructive forms, is the subject of another starring Garcia Bernal showcase: Pedro Almodóvar's *Bad Education*. Almodóvar, of course, is Spanish, and so are the various characters Garcia Bernal plays in the film. But from the moment you first see the actor strut into the frame in full drag—looking uncannily like Julia Roberts, only prettier—you can see why Almodóvar dispensed with national pride. If Guevara's identity is in flux throughout *The Motorcycle Diaries*, the identity of *Bad Education*'s semiprotagonist, an aspiring actor, is so dizzyingly fluid that it's impossible even to give the character a name. He is ingenuous one moment, lascivious the next, and his mutability allows G. G. B. to demonstrate a range that confirms him as one of the most gifted actors of his generation. That he won no prize at Cannes, where the film was the opening-night attraction, is due only to Almodóvar's decision to withhold it from competition. Bad move, Pedro.

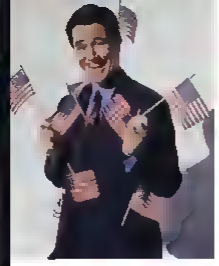
Nobody, alas, is likely to suggest that Diego Luna was robbed. His own post-*Mamá* career, while not an outright embarrassment, nonetheless serves as an object lesson in the way Hollywood pays lip service to diversity while quietly marginalizing anybody not named Halle or Denzel.

Kevin Costner cast Luna as a free-grazing farmhand in last year's underrated western *Open Range*, but the character, known as Button (how cute!), exists solely as rifle fodder. He has to be injured halfway through the movie so that Costner can make taciturn goo-goo eyes at nurse Annette Bening. He is one rung up the evolutionary ladder from the random, frequently ethnic *Enterprise* crew member who ventures onto each episode's strange new planet in order to give Kirk and Spock something to avenge. Still, that's more respect than Luna is accorded in *The Terminal*, in which he's just one of several handy minorities providing Tom Hanks with a tour of America's melting pot in microcosm. We don't even get to see him woo Zoë Saldana's fetching immigration officer, once Hanks has brought the two together, the movie loses interest, cutting from their first tentative conversation straight to the wedding.

This month sees the release of *Criminal*, Luna's second English-language starring role. (As an act of charity, I will ignore the first, except to note that every single review of this picture, without exception, included the word *Swayze*.) Ironically, *Criminal* is itself a remake of an Argentine movie called *Nine Queens*, about an amateur swindler who gets recruited by a professional con artist to assist him in pulling off a major job. Given that the film was coproduced and cowritten by Steven Soderbergh (under the pseudonym "Sam Lowry") and directed by his longtime assistant director, Gregory Jacobs, this is vanity filmmaking at its most inessential: a wan, dutiful facsimile of a movie that wasn't very distinctive to begin with. Imagine a Mamet caper minus his arrestingly staccato dialogue, culminating in a twist that you've been dourly anticipating since roughly scene three, there being nothing else to occupy your attention. Now imagine it in slow motion.

In the original, Gastón Pauls gave the neophyte a memorably erratic personality, alternately cunning and befuddled. Luna, who acts most of his scenes opposite the great John C. Reilly (*Chicago*), seems to have decided that his best bet is to exhibit no personality at all, lest he upstage his costar. In the film's best scene, Luna's character uses his knowledge of Spanish to extort a higher percentage of the profit from his desperate mentor. But while the sequence works conceptually, there's no emotional charge to it, no sense of this kid's exultation in using his outsider status as a weapon. After a while, it seems to be the actor himself who's wary.

To be fair, all of this isn't quite as schematic as I'm making it look. Garcia Bernal made an appearance in something called *I'm with Lucy*, starring Monica Potter, playing one of the heroine's several blind dates. Luna has the lead in a new movie called *Nicotina*, which I can't really address because I walked out of it at last year's Toronto Film Festival after determining that the catalog description—"Mexico's answer to Guy Ritchie's *Snatch*"—was hideously accurate. It's also possible that Luna simply knows more English than G. G. B., making the latter's virtue a linguistic accident. But it seems more likely that Garcia Bernal is following the lead of Spanish heartthrob Javier Bardem, who tends to keep his distance from Hollywood, while Luna is taking his cue from former Almodóvar regular Antonio Banderas, who has long since embraced the town. One of these men has been nominated for an Oscar. The other is married to Melanie Griffith. Little more need be said.



Q+A: Stephen Colbert

AS A VETERAN correspondent for Comedy Central's *The Daily Show*, Stephen Colbert has been blurring the line between satire and legitimate journalism since 1996. In August he'll be in New York City to cover the Republican convention and, in his own words, "sift the corn of truth from the turd of the 24-hour news cycle." —ERIC SPITZNAGEL

ESQ How do you make a candidate feel relaxed and trust you?
SC I approach all interviews with fear. I'm frequently afraid that somebody is going to take a punch at me. It's only cowardice that keeps me from laughing.
ESQ Is it true you once described John Kerry as "cadaverous"?
SC I'd like to officially change that to "Lurch-like." Wait, how about "thoughtful zombie"? Does that sound better? He's a thoughtful, caring, intelligent, committed zombie.
ESQ How will your election coverage be superior to the networks'?
SC One word: *pyrotechnics*. And lots of smoke machines. All of the correspondents are going to be flown in on harnesses in spider costumes, and our new motto is "We'll catch you in our sartorical web!"
ESQ Any chance you'll get that coveted interview with Bush Jr.?
SC I don't see why he wouldn't talk to me. I'd make him look like a genius. He could bat me around like a redheaded stepchild.
ESQ *The Daily Show* has received a lot of accolades during the last few years. Does all the attention help you or hurt you?
SC It's actually made things more difficult. Now everybody knows about the show, and they're more wary of us. I've caught aides trying to look at my questions before I do an interview. They suddenly think there'll be some consequence to talking to me. I don't need that.



the rules **RULE NO. 323:** If you're in a strip club and a girl says she's gonna call the manager over, your night just got less fun. **RULE NO. 551:** Flavored dental floss should never be sweeter than the foods you wish to remove. **RULE NO. 912:** The angrier the man, the more misspellings in his e-mails.



Political Arsonist

With acerbic acuity and incendiary wit, illustrator Steve Brodner has spent the past three decades singeing the Washington elite with little more than a pack of colored pencils. Upon the release of his first collection of political art, *Freedom Fries* (Fantagraphics, $30), we asked the artist to describe the faces of three of our presidents.

George W. Bush "He looks like a monkey boy: the eyes close together in the center of his face, the overhanging lip, the big, floppy ears. It's too perfect, too good."

Bill Clinton "He has a big, expansive face with a lot of real estate, as if to say, 'This is a man of excess.' "

George H. W. Bush "His face is like a really dried-out cucumber. All you have to do is make two parallel lines and fill in the rest."

MAHB

» Really Short Reviews **1. *The Secret Goldfish*** (Fourth Estate, $23), by David Means. With stunning simplicity, Means offers 15 stirring portraits of tragedy, loss, and love. **2. *Rammer Jammer Yellow Hammer*** (Crown, $24), by Warren St. John. While following the University of Alabama football team, *New York Times* reporter St. John investigates the ability of sports to transform reasonable men into deranged lunatics. **3. *Another Bullshit Night in Suck City*** (Norton, $24), by Nick Flynn. From Ponzi schemes to homeless shelters, Flynn traces the life of his indigent father with unsentimental clarity.



Found Postcards

The evocative stories that make up Pulitzer-prize–winning author Robert Olen Butler's latest collection, *Had a Good Time* (Grove, $23), were inspired by postcard messages like these, written in a bygone American era.

1) "This is where the people who have more money than brains put up. . . . Saw lots of style, but don't see as the people were any happier."

2) "After the battle notice the pretty Senorita's in this photo. The one in white does my laundry."

Big Important Book of the Month

FOR ALL ITS Gen X trappings, Arthur Phillips's first novel, *Prague*, was essentially an old-school novel of ideas, a retro gabfest populated by the well-educated, the hyperarticulate. Its characters drank brandy, mourned the passing of youth, and meditated upon the meaning of nostalgia. And the novel succeeded in invoking the pleasures of café society just as those pleasures seemed certain to fade under a wash of tabloid headlines. *Prague* served, at once, as pleasurable throwback and quiet elegy.

With *The Egyptologist* (Random House, $25), Phillips offers another meandering book stocked with anachronistic charms, this one a slow and intricately built whodunit for the King Tut lover in all of us. Trading the spoken word for the written one, Phillips constructs his tale entirely from old-fashioned modes of communication—the long and expository letter, the urgent cablegram, the private journal. Two narrative lines spin out to form a rather tangled plot: A salty retired P.I. from Sydney recounts his most baffling case while an Egyptologist from Harvard details his all-or-nothing search for proof of a legendary king. When it works, this approach calls to mind the intertextual urgency of Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, the darkly comic play of Nabokov's *Pale Fire*. When it doesn't, it calls to mind a melodramatic pastiche of these influences—a postmodern experiment that seems like more fun for the writer than the reader.

I'd be surprised if you didn't have the central mystery of this caper figured out somewhere before the halfway point. But here's the thing: I'd also be surprised if this bothered you too much. After all, when is the last time somebody made the effort to spin you a tale? When is the last time somebody wrote you a letter? When is the last time you encountered a contemporary writer with Phillips's far-reaching interests and easy facility with far away places, far-away times?

—BENJAMIN ALSUP



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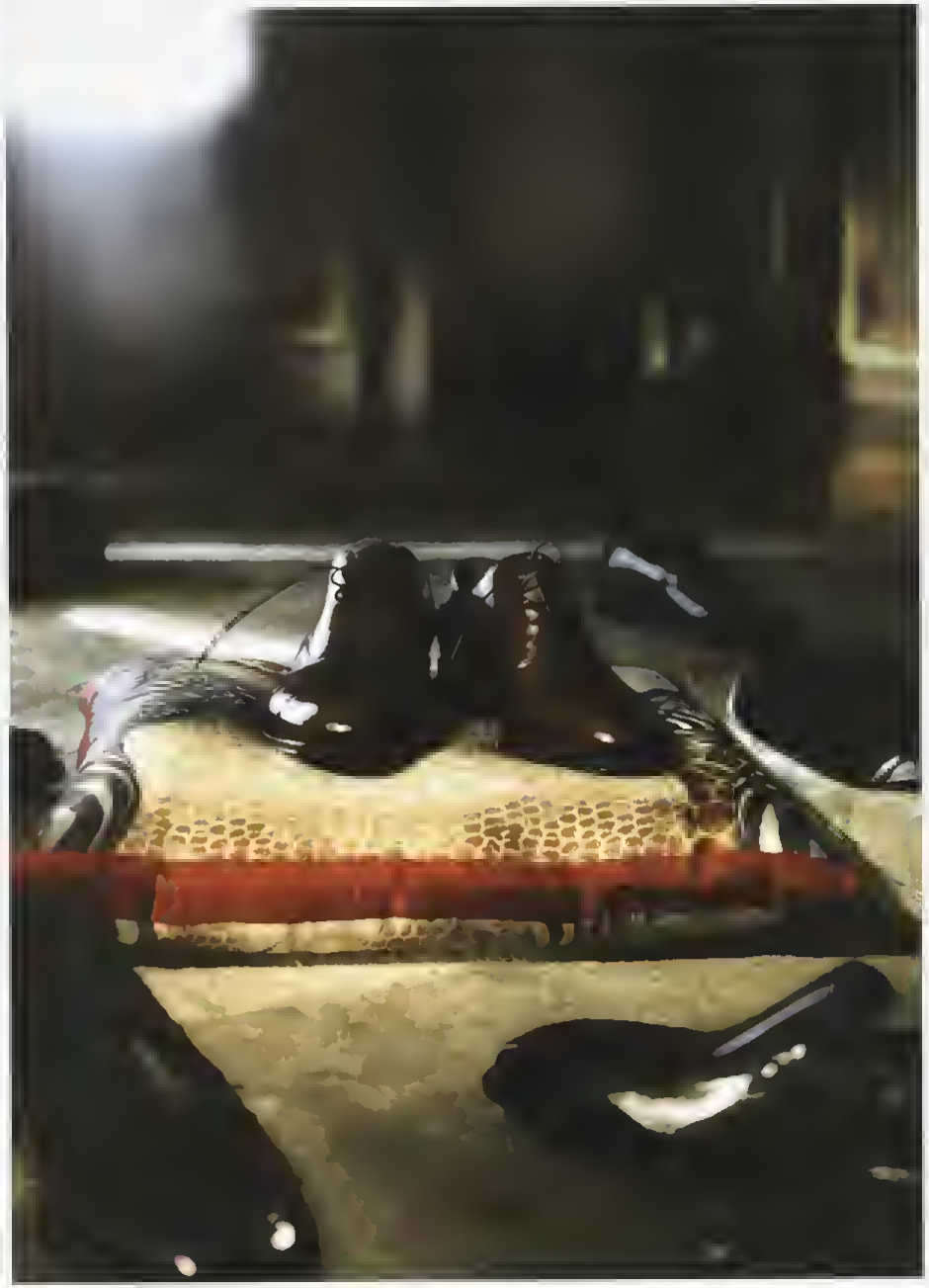
New York Fifth Avenue Palm Beach Bal Harbour Shops San Francisco Las Vegas Forum Shops at Caesars Atlanta Lenox Square Houston Galleria South Coast Plaza Costa Mesa Fashion Island Newport Beach Rodeo Drive Beverly Hills Chicago Hermès Gallery Troy Somerset Plaza Short Hills Paramus Park Fashion Valley Scottsdale Fashion Square Miami Bal Harbour Shops Coconut Grove Aventura Mall Honolulu Royal Hawaiian Shopping Center Ala Moana Center Bahamas Vancouver

















New York Fifth Avenue New York SoHo Americana Manhasset Beverly Hills Chicago Houston Galleria South Coast Plaza
Palm Beach Bal Harbour Shops San Francisco Las Vegas Forum Shops at Caesars Atlanta Lenox Square Santana Row
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For more information on the fight, visit www.arniesarmybattles.com or call 866-586-5585.

ARNIE'S ARMY BATTLES

Prostate Cancer Foundation

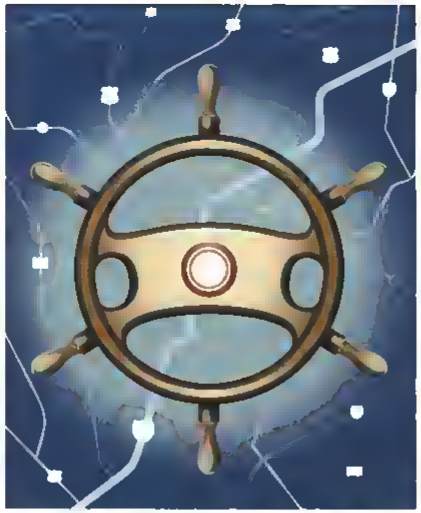
The Digital Man

(BY BARRY SONNENFELD)



Where Am I?

Our disoriented director fights back with the latest in GPS



SWEETIE (THE WIFE) AND I are at our Telluride, Colorado, home, avoiding the traffic jams, angst, and bad manners that a summer in the Hamptons represents. Since Telluride offers both hiking and driving adventures, I asked Esquire to send me some global-positioning-system devices. I tested two car-mounted units and a handheld device, and they all were interesting. *Interesting*, by the way, is the term I use to describe my mother's pot roast. On the one hand, pot roast shouldn't be in the oven so long that the grease catches fire. On the other, who else puts a jar of Yuban instant coffee into the broth? Um, I'm digressing here. The **[1] Magellan RoadMate 700** ($1,299; magellangps.com) and the **[2] TomTom Go** ($899; tomtom.com) are both new GPS devices for your car. You plug them in to your cigarette lighter, type in an address, and weirdly, in both cases, the same computer-generated woman's voice—not unlike Kate Winslet's with a Japanese twang—tells you how to get there. The Magellan has the bigger, brighter screen and a whopping ten-gigabyte drive, which means it has almost every map in America built into it. But I liked the TomTom's bird's-eye POV better. Plus, the TomTom could tell the difference between a rotary and a four-corner intersection. (One warning: In some new cars, both units require an additional external antenna, a coating on the windshield blocks reception.)

Neither of them got Sweetie's approval. She kept telling me to turn off the Kate Winslet voice and pay attention to where I was driving. "Why do we need five cell phones and two GPS systems when we're driving to Wal-Mart for more Wrangler jeans you don't need and you know where you're going?" "Just in case?" I suggested meekly.

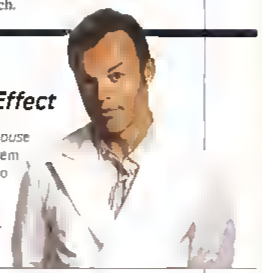


I also tested the **[3] Garmin GPSMap 60CS** ($535; garmin.com), which is a handheld GPS device. Last year, my neighbor, the film director Larry Kasdan, got so lost that he had to call the Telluride rescue squad. With this, he could have saved himself the embarrassment. Walking down our road (avoiding our bear-ridden trail through the woods), I would press a button to place a "waypoint" whenever we reached a turnaround in one of our road's many switchbacks. Waypoints are like electronic bread crumbs that Hansel and Gretel might have dropped, with the added advantage that no birds are going to eat them. When we got to the bottom of our road, I pressed the button to reverse the procedure and get us home. It brought us to each of the waypoints I had created on our walk downhill, and soon we were back at our house, desperately trying to fill our lungs with whatever air there was at 10,000 feet. It told us how many miles we walked, how fast we walked, and how many feet we descended and climbed. It also has built-in maps and works as a car navigation system. This thing is cool.

And thanks to my experiments, I learned there's a huge similarity between using a GPS navigation device and asking Sweetie for directions. Either ignore them completely, or follow their every demand. If you pick and choose what to listen to, you'll end up very, very lost. Or sleeping on the couch.

What's in Your Netflix Queue?

By Graham Norton, host of Comedy Central's *The Graham Norton Effect*

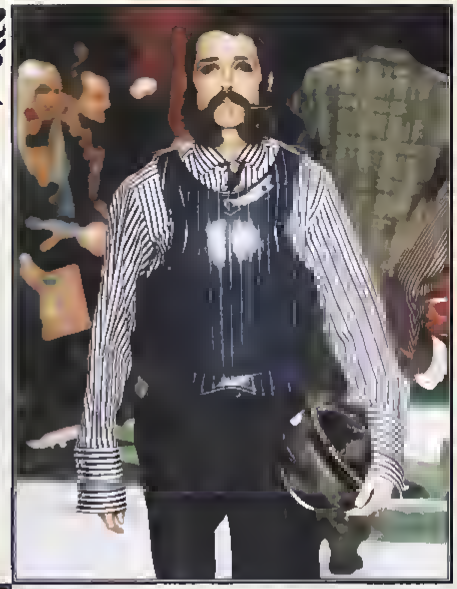


1] *E.T.* Who can resist the story of an adorable talking testicle from outer space? **2]** *The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas.* Dolly's version of "I Will Always Love You" beats Whitney's every time. **3]** *Convoy.* Cell phones seem to have replaced CB radio, and that truly saddens me. **4]** *Citizen Kane.* Always good to leave lying around to impress boys I drag back from the bar. **5]** *Wild at Heart.* "Hotter than Georgia asphalt" is my favorite line from any movie, and I quite like the snakeskin jacket as well. **6]** *Desperately Seeking Susan.* Madonna has never been better, or put another way, it's the only time she wasn't completely useless. **7]** *Babe.* A memorable movie for me since I stopped being a vegetarian after watching it.

TOP LEFT: JOHN HERSEY. TOP RIGHT: LLOYD MILLER.

photo: Aldo Castaldi









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Transcendent Steak

AND CHEAP, TOO A typical flank steak—about a pound and a half, more than enough for two committed carnivores—shouldn't cost more than 12 bucks. Start marinading Sunday afternoon, September 5, to ensure perfection on Labor Day.

» Combine the ingredients for the marinade and place them in a large Ziploc bag with the steaks. Refrigerate overnight, turning the meat occasionally. An hour before grill time, remove the steaks and wipe off the excess marinade. Grill over a hot charcoal fire (the coals should still have a faint orange glow), five minutes a side for medium-rare. Let sit for five minutes before slicing against the grain. Serves four.

MARINADE

2 red onions, chopped
2 cloves garlic, minced
2 tbsp fresh ginger, grated
1/4 cup olive oil
1/4 cup soy sauce
juice of 2 lemons
1 cup parsley, chopped
1 tsp cumin
1 tsp turmeric
1 tsp black pepper
1 tsp red-pepper flakes

2 flank steaks, about 1 1/2 pounds each

Wine Math

We've done the calculations. This is the bottle of the month. Try it with the flank steak. —ANDREA IMMER

DATES + CINNAMON + MOLASSES-CURED BACON + CONCHA Y TORO CASILLERO DEL DIABLO CARMÉNÈRE CHILE ($14)



The G.O.P. Guide to New York City Restaurants

Dear Conventioneers,
After consultation with our Big Apple corporate donors Dick Cheney and Karl Rove have issued a list of restaurants best avoided while you're in New York:

- **ELAINE'S** Upper East Side hangout run by liberal Jewish hostess Elaine Kaufman for dissolute L.A. crowd and New York literati and political journalists like Carl Bernstein, David Halberstam, and Woody Allen.
- **DA SILVANO:** Lair of effete fashion crowd with an owner who caters to such people. Embarrassing amount of cheek kissing.
- **LE BERNARDIN, LA GRENOUILLE, MONTRACHET,** and any other French restaurant.
- **LE PERIGORD** Not only French, but close to the UN and favored by ambassadors from countries we either hate or have invaded.
- **CAFÉ DES ARTISTES** Near Lincoln Center and decked out with scandalous Howard Chandler Christy nude murals offensive to Attorney General John Ashcroft. Also frequented by liberal media from nearby ABC TV.
- **PAMIR** Upper East Side Afghani restaurant. Hey, you never know what they'll put in your soup.
- **MICHAEL'S:** East Coast branch of Santa Monica original, full of Hollywood yo-yos and publishers with several current anti-Bush best-sellers to their credit.
- **FLORENT:** Late-night hangout in meatpacking district with weirdo artsy music crowd and many gay people (who also frequent a nearby nightclub named—*can you believe this?*—Hell).
- **PRAVDA** The owners must think it's cute to re-create the Soviet era, but we didn't win the cold war just to see such places flourish under our noses. —JOHN MARIANI



BLOOMINGDALE'S DKNY.COM

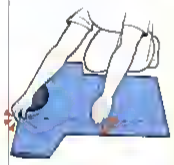
TOP: MARK HOOPER. ILLUSTRATIONS: ARS LEETARU

How to Fold a T-Shirt

Or, how to channel your inner ninja at the laundromat BY CHRISTOPHER BEREND

I'M NO NINJA WHEN IT COMES TO LAUNDRY. Sure, I can measure a cup of Tide, finish the job with a sheet of Snuggle, and even separate my whites. Momma taught this boy well. No, my problem with laundry is that while I can fold a pair of jeans or roll my boxer briefs just so, I am completely incompetent when it comes to folding the one item I have the most of—T-shirts. When I'm done with a white Hanes tee, it looks as if it just spent a week in a beach bag. Until now.

I've recently made the laundromat my dojo, thanks to an average-looking Japanese woman I found on the Internet (telivyel.ferrona.to/maglietta.mpg). In the video she's poised in front of a flat blue T-shirt, folding the tee into a perfect rectangle in just two *count 'em two*, lightning-quick moves. After just a few tries, I had the move down cold, revealing my inner laundry ninja. Mr. Miyagi would be proud, and so would Momma. Here's how it works.



The stance: Lay a short-sleeved T-shirt flat in front of you with the neck at your right. Find the center point on the far side and pinch it with your left hand, about two inches in from the far edge. Position your right hand directly across from it between the shirt's neck and shoulder. Pinch the shirt between your thumb and forefinger. Close your eyes. Your world is quiet. This is your dojo.



The setup: With the shirt still firmly pinched, cross your right hand over your left. Your right hand should firmly collect the new edge (the waist end) it just inherited. Recall the T-shirt your ex stole from you, the one with the hole in the armpit. Grit your teath. Inhale deeply.



The move: Now swiftly uncross your hands, lifting them and the shirt up and away from the floor. *Hiyaa!* Let the loose sleeve drop down, and gently fold your rectangle in half directly over it. Exhale. Done.

The benefits: Not only will your sleeves be wrinkle free, but when performed correctly in a laundromat, the move can be a very effective method of picking up the busty blond by the washers. Just remember this ancient ninja proverb: *Man who folds own clothes writes own ticket.*

If You Never Buy Another: TIE



MICRON TIE BY KITON, has the memory of an elephant. Not the kind of memory that will help you pass the bar exam or outwit an auditor, but the kind of memory that allows you to throw it in a suitcase or shove it into your pocket without worry. The tie's wool fibers are wound so tight that it recovers without a wrinkle every time. But does that make it worth three hundred bucks? Take into account that it's still sumptuous enough to knot with ease and that it hangs beautifully, and you won't mind ponying up three bills for it. Because it just may end up being the last tie you'll ever need. $295, www.kiton.it



The Guru

Sound sartorial advice from **Bill Hancock**, style expert

I've noticed recently that lots of well-dressed men are forgoing belts. Can I pull this off?

MY NAME would not be Bill Hancock if I didn't have a worthy selection of brightly striped collegiate belts and cowboy and biker buckles lurking in the 'drobe. Girls seem to like 'em. Maybe they represent a challenge.

But in the unreal sartorial utopia that fills my dreams, a belt would never be necessary. Richie, my London tailor, has e-mailed staunch views on the matter to me from his Caribbean tax haven. He regards the belt as the leather accessory of Beelzebub, preferring to deck me out banker style with suspenders or not at all. The thinking in his circle is that custom-made trousers are designed to be worn from the shoulder rather than the waist, which may sound a little odd in this day and age of low-slung hipsters. Despite Richie's authority, as an ex-low-slung hipster myself, I must admit I'm somewhat torn twixt belt and brace. Yet for suits, side-adjusters on the waistband—just acceptable in Richie's world—more than adequately cope with the fluctuations of my waistline.

In casual gear, too, I still think beltless is a good look. For me, the vacant loops on a pair of jeans act like hanging question marks—an emphatic "couldn't care less" about getting it perfectly accessorized. That in my book is real style. The point is this: Your pants should really fit like a glove, as if they're custom. Bespoke denim, anyone?



FOLDING MCKIBILLO GURU ISTVAN BANYAI

{Manly Page}



The Endorsement: Barbasol

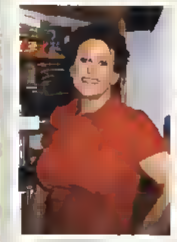
ARE YOU CONSIDERING a career in the exciting new field of gay-reality makeover cable television? Good for you, tiger! Suddenly, you'll notice people hollering things at you from across the street like "[your name], Miami loves you!" and my favorite, "Do my husband!" It's a super feeling!

But perhaps the best fringe benefit of employ with *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*, on which I'm the food-and-wine specialist, is this. I have not needed to purchase a men's-personal-grooming product since July 14, 2003. Thanks to the exceedingly thoughtful men's-skin-care industry, for more than a year I have shaved with only the finest emollients, tinctures, and poultices available for the daily pestilence that is facial-hair removal, from the staggeringly costly but deluxe mousse from the Art of Shaving ($14 for a tiny two-and-a-half ounce tube!) to the silky and soothing frappe from Anthony Logistics for Men. Friends, I have tried them all now, and these two are among the best. But not long ago, the largesse of the men's-cosmetics cartel faltered. There I was, wet and shivering before the fogged-up mirror, with nothing to lather with but an ancient, rusty-bottomed can of Barbasol.

Concerned, I squirted a baseball-sized dollop of fluff into my palm and spread it across my scratchy mug, and—while perhaps lacking in aroma notes of rosemary and lemongrass—the stuff instantly transported me to my father's side, circa age 12. And that was great. Like Old Spice, like Brylcreem, the old-school shaving cream evokes another, manlier time, when boys learned how to shave from their fricking fathers—not from the Bravo network. (You've got to admit, guys, that we're doing the Lord's work here!) And unless you've got crazily bad razor bumps, it's probably all you're ever gonna need. Meanwhile: I love ya, Dad.

—TED ALLEN

Brutally Honest Personals



Laurel R.
Age: 46
Height: 5
Weight: 140
Occupation: Ratired para-legal/Web designer/personal trainer
Location: Walnut Creek, California
Sexual history: Before I got married, I kept the names of men I slept with in a binder. I have herpes, but I don't give it away.

» I've got fabulous boobs, and I'm only slightly overweight. My skin, however, is embarrassingly loose from years of yo-yo dieting. I have a golden retriever and five rabbits. The dog sleeps on my bed, and the rabbits live in the kitchen. My health is good except for the chronic depression, the two heart attacks I had last year, the sciatica, and the degenerative joint disease. I am a recovering drug addict, a recovering bulimic, a recovering shopaholic, and a recovering sex addict.

Redeeming qualities: I have integrity and a great sense of humor, not to mention money and brains, but I won't date you unless you do, too.

Esquire will be publishing Brutally Honest Personals in every issue. To contact Laurel or submit your own personal, log on to esquire.com/brutal.

the rules RULE NO. 32: The fatter the friend, the more he or she will lecture you on dietary advice. RULE NO. 67: Do not antagonize a man with an eye patch. RULE NO. 736: No one's ever gotten laid by wearing pins with funny sayings. RULE NO. 812: As a group, brunette porn stars are more classically attractive than blond porn stars.



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GORDON'S

{Answer Fella}



Real Kings, Stoned Puppies, Tray Tables & Boring Parties

ESQUIRE'S ANSWER FELLA believes that there are no stupid questions, just stupid people who don't ask questions, fearing they'll look stupid. So ask Answer Fella anything. If he doesn't know the answer, he'll find out who does, or who has a guess that sounds right.

Are any *real* monarchs—not wimpy British-type royalty but *absolute* monarchs who can do any demned thing they please—are left?

Precious few—and their number is dwindling. Depending on how you define *absolute* and *monarch*, the list includes the rulers of Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Oman, Brunei, Bhutan, and Swaziland, plus the holy-city-state-within-a-nation, that darling principality of peace—and that hotbed of Communionism—the Vatican.

Michael Gordon, Africa and Middle East editor at *The Economist*'s Intelligence Unit, advises AF that although Saudi Arabia and Oman qualify as absolute monarchies, "before any law is passed in those countries, a long process of consultation takes place." Mr. Gordon also notes that Qatar plans to adopt a new national governing system within a year.

Sweeter tidings for aficionados of tyranny and despotism arrive from Swaziland, where Africa's last absolute monarch, King Mswati III, got hitched in 2002 to his ninth wife, who had been abducted for his delectation in 2001 after the kingdom's annual Reed Dance, when she was 17 years old. Her kidnapping followed Mswati's edict that all women in Swaziland under the age of 18 are forbidden to have sexual intercourse.

Now, there's a *real* monarch, styling it old-school absolute, my brother.

Would it really hurt me not to have my seat back upright, my tray table stowed, and my seat belt fastened in a plane crash? I mean, really. If this huge plane is going to explode, will four degrees of recline matter to me?

It's always about you, isn't it, you selfish basterd? Demned flight attendents just won't give you a moment's peace before you die, eh? Well, consider this. Most plane crashes are survivable. A buckled seat belt, a stowed trey table, and an upright seat back in front of every passenger all make it fer less likely that skulls will be crushed immediately—and more likely that folks will manage to leave their seats and grope their way to the nearest exit before fire and smoke doom them.

That's right: "the nearest exit"—but you were too busy doodling in your coloring book to head the flight attendent urging you to note just where that might be. Pinhead.

Will it harm my dog if I smoke pot in the house?

What is it, Lassie? What's wrong, girl? Timmy's down in the basement with a bong glued to his lips? Okay, girl—go get Sheriff Ashcroft! Good dog!

But seriously. Nobody would honestly maintain that it's healthy for any creature with lungs to suck down smoke—even secondhand. Although AF once roomed with a Neapolitan mastiff—a huge Wailers fan, who toted his own one-hitter in a neck cask.

According to Jay Gaasling, a Buffalo veterinarian—meaning that he practices animal medicine in Buffalo, New York—not that his practice is limited to buffalo, nor that he himself is a buffalo—"The biggest risk is not in the smoke but in what the owner does while high. If consistent marijuana smoking results in a less dedicated owner, that puts the pet at risk. Also, if a pet were to get into a stash of marijuana, it would suffer the toxic effects of the drug, which could result in vomiting, diarrhea, and, in some rare cases, death."

Steve Bloom, an editor over at *High Times* magazine, begs to differ: "I have two dogs and a cat and have never had a problem," he rasps, "except for the time one dog ate a piece of hash. She got really anxious. I had to comfort her until she came down."

Steve accomplished this by stuffing her with ground beef, frijoles, and salsa verda, then huffing her farts.

How can I tactfully flee a boring party early? I need some exit strategies.

Tactfully? Make no statement implying that your departure is due to any defect of your host or fellow guests—such as: "I'd love to stay, but one more second listening to this idiotic drivel and I'll puke up that rancid ratatouille. Say, where'd you come up with that recipe anyway, the Al Qaeda cookbook?"

Instead, do what everyone else does. Make stuff up. A baby-sitting crisis is always good, unless you're childless. Or sneak out. It's not like anyone actually cares whether you live or die—or finds you all that interesting. But if you actually care about decency and etiquette, you can heed the following advice, courtesy of Cindy Post Senning, director of the Emily Post Institute: "Find something you can honestly say you really enjoyed, like 'The food was great. I especially liked that fantastic dessert,' or 'It was so good to get a chance to see Sally—it's been ages,' or 'I love how you've redone the living room. These colors are the best.'"

Then, as soon as the door closes behind you, everybody—particularly Sally, that bitter twit—can sneer about what an obvious, worthless phony you are.

Got a question? Send it to Answer Fella via esquire.com/talk.

ILLUSTRATION BY MARK MATCHE

MAHB

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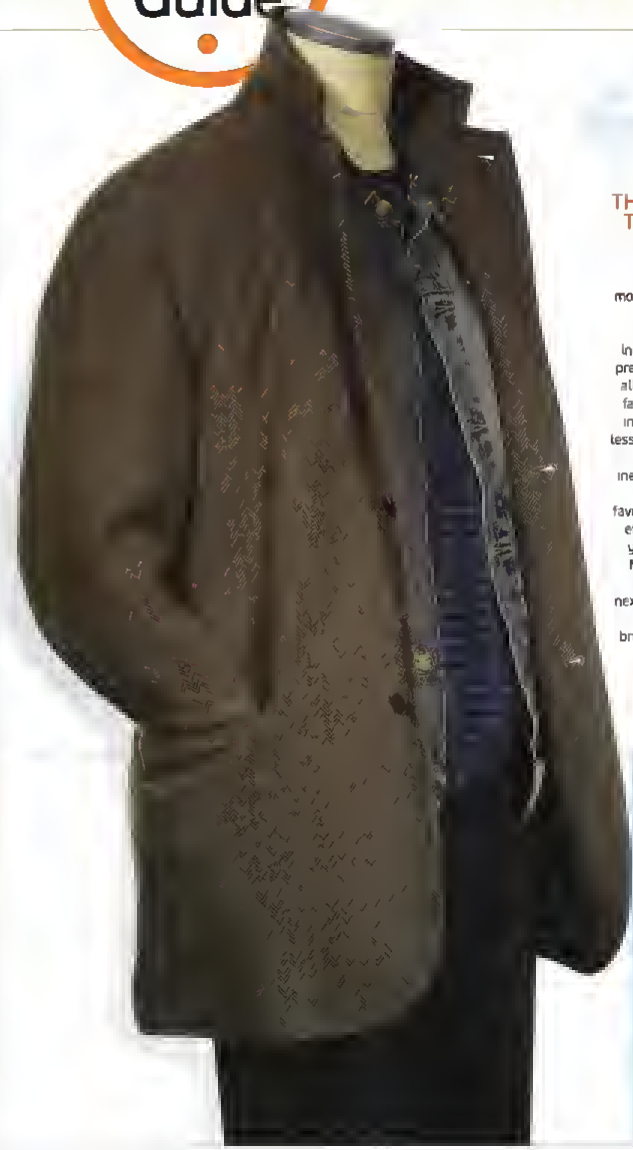
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the Esquire Guide



THE CASUAL COMBO

THE SMARTER YOU LAYER, THE SMARTER YOU LOOK

With fall approaching and winter not that far away it's time to give your closet a workout. And these next few months are full of opportunity, a chance to combine your favorite pieces into something sharp, comfortable and incredibly flexible. It's a ripe time to express your own individual style. And it's all done through layering—taking your favorite shirt or sweater and building it into a finely tailored combo that's endlessly wearable. Each piece can stand on its own (and may have to when the inevitable Indian summer creeps in), but putting together a great shirt, your favorite piece of denim and a fitted jacket, as you see here, tells the world that you wisely prepared yourself for both Mother Nature's whimsy and the last-minute cocktail party. Because these next few months will undoubtedly bring a little of both. Two-button single-breasted herringbone blazer ($129) and denim jacket ($78) by DKNY Jeans, cotton shirt ($65) by DKNY, corduroy trousers ($98) by Joseph Abboud.

The Extra 10%

SCARVES Break with the colder months' earth-tone convention and keep your neck warm with a little color. Wool scarves ($30 each) by J. Crew.



the Esquire Guide

FOR MONDAY MORNING A boardroom-sharp jacket and tailored trousers will keep the boss from thinking that you're losing your edge. Three-button wool jacket ($395) by H Hilfiger. cashmere sweater ($1,595). cotton shirt ($395), and cotton trousers ($295) by Loro Piana. silk pocket square ($65) by Robert Talbott.

FOR SUNDAY AFTERNOON There is nothing more comfortable than cashmere. And there's nothing quite as warm as layering it with a vest and a wool jacket. Three-button jacket ($1,075) and wool scarf ($195) by Vestimenta. reversible polyester vest ($640) and cashmere turtleneck ($490) by Etro. jeans ($92) by Lucky Brand.







WING TIPS A pair of brown wing tips will ensure a healthy dose of water-cooler compliments. Leather wing tips ($340) by Paul Smith.

The Extra 10%

BOOTS Your favorite pair of jeans beg for your favorite pair of boots. and this military-style pair will surely get their fair share of use. Leather boots ($395) by Bruno Magli.



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the Esquire Guide

The Definitive Style Rules: LAYERING

FOR FRIDAY NIGHT A dark corduroy jacket is perfect for evening cocktails, especially when matched with a cool pair of pinstripe trousers. Three-button corduroy jacket ($295) by Kenneth Cole. Zip-front wool sweater ($58) and wool trousers ($118) by J. Crew. Wool sweater ($250) by Hickey Freeman.





1 Unless you live in Palm Springs, fall and winter weather is rarely predictable. So take a cue from mountaineers: Three thin layers are better than one thick one.

2 The closer to your skin, the thinner the material.

3 A layer can be defined as any piece of clothing that can be worn with dignity on its own.

4 Your spring-break T-shirt from sophomore year, the one she's been trying like hell to get rid of, does not constitute a layer.

5 A layered combo should always include one piece of luxury, and for luxury, a tailored jacket will always do the trick.

6 Having said that, don't be afraid to shed that luxurious layer when the temperature begins to rise. Nobody likes the sweaty guy, no matter how cool his jacket is.

7 Just because Mother Nature is fond of dreary browns when the weather turns cold, that doesn't mean you have to be. Inject some color by way of a red scarf or a blue sweater. Be fearless.

8. Casual doesn't have to mean jeans. Add some texture and personality below the belt with cords, khakis, or a pair of pinstripe trousers.

9 If you can't put your arms all the way down at your sides, then your sweater's way too thick.

10. Layer just right and you can leave the coat at home.

The Extra 10%

LEATHER BAG Because you'll need something dignified to carry around that change of clothes for the weekend. Leather bag ($1,250) by Bottega Veneta.





PHOTOGRAPH BY JONATHAN CARLSON

FOR STORE INFORMATION SEE PAGE 229


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Vintage 120 Vintage 123 Vintage 126

Vintage Collection

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THE ESQUIRE CATALOG

The Essentials

Because in an age of mass consumption, what a man needs most is a shorter wish list



1

THE CARTIER SANTOS 100 Now and then, a new watch appears with the ingredients to be an instant fashion classic. Cartier's Santos 100 is a very beefy update of the 1978 Santos de Cartier and the hundred-year commemoration of the first-ever wristwatch, which was commissioned by Alberto Santos-Dumont, the Brazilian aviator who, among other exploits, flew a cigar-shaped balloon around the Eiffel Tower. Its footprint is picked out in screws around the Santos 100's face. Expect this one to fly. $5,700. www.cartier.com

J CREW CASHMERE J.Crew, a source of dependable quality for every occasion, has pulled out all the stops this fall with a clever, preppy-inspired collection packing enough affordable luxury to sit perfectly alongside your more expensive wardrobe purchases. Witness the company's current range of colorful cashmere knits—clean, simple, and, best of all, they won't break the bank. Good cashmere for less than two hundred bucks? We like it. $178. jcrew.com



2



3

PHOTO BOOKS Every man should have one of the five photo books recommended by Mike Gallagher, whose Gallagher's Paper Collectibles has inspired the fashion elite for decades. You'll need Richard Avedon's *Observations* and Irving Penn's *Moments Preserved*. Also: *Vogue's Book of Houses, Gardens, People*; Slim Aarons's *A Wonderful Time*; and *The Decisive Moment* by Henri Cartier-Bresson, who, according to Gallagher, "photographed from the hip with his Leica." Prices vary. vintagemagazines.com

BRUNOMAGLI

800 MAGLI 30 www.brunomagli.com



A SOLID LEATHER BAG If, in line with fashion's smartening up, you're casting around for something a little more sophisticated than the sorry-looking nylon backpack you lug to the office, consider the Mulberry Eastwood, a luxurious and reassuringly masculine answer to all your daily storage problems. Mulberry became famous during the eighties for its old-school luggage and is now undergoing something of a revolution. The Eastwood's vegetable-tanned calfskin means it will gain a patina and only improve with age. $1,300. mulberry.com

4



5

UPPER CLASS Italian shoemaker A. Testoni tiptoes elegantly between classic good taste and something sharp enough to wear with the new generation of cool fitted suits. The company celebrates its seventy-fifth anniversary this fall with handmade-shoe designs in which sheer quality is paramount. Reassuringly, at more than $1,000 per pair, you'll get 100 percent hand stitching. Monk-strap shoes by A. Testoni, $1,390. www.testoniusa.com.



6

STRIPES FOR YOUR FEET It's hard to get excited about socks. But fall's definitive move toward upscale dressing with a vital display of individuality means paying attention to the forgotten corners of your wardrobe. Fortunately, H Hilfiger, Paul Smith, and Etro (seen above) have it covered, so even if the rest of you is low-key, you can put an unexpected spring in your step with striped threads for your feet. $10 to $60.

www.gianfrancoferre.com

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Get the things that make you prepared every day.
a plan. Get a kit
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you by The America Prepared Campaign, Inc



7 **AN ENTIRELY NEW WARDROBE** Michael Kors's eponymous men's line is founded on a bedrock of unabashed designer luxury. It's urban sporty in an all-American way, but it's also deeply classy. And expensive.

So it is somewhat surprising that this fall Kors is launching a new clothing line, Michael by Michael Kors, the premise of which is utter affordability. In fact, Michael is so affordable, it will hardly dent the bank balance at all. Well, not much. And while Kors's higher-priced line is distributed only through a handpicked selection of stores across the nation, Michael launches this month in more than four hundred stores.

"If I had attempted to launch Michael ten years ago, I think American men would not have been ready for it," he explains. "When we first got casual Friday, I think a lot of guys thought it gave them carte blanche to be a slob. Men have realized lately that there is a place between looking uptight and looking like a slob, because it is possible to be relaxed and still look polished." And colorful. The new collection has color in spades.

"When you put together a wardrobe, it's just like cooking a great meal," Kors says. "You need the basics—the camel jacket or the navy suit—but color provides emotion, the way spices add flavor. It's not that men have never worn color, they've just forgotten how a fantastic color can change their mood." Yet despite the rich color and bold style of Michael, there's no discernible age barrier to the collection, opening his luxurious look to a broad market that may never have looked at it otherwise. "These days, a man of fifty who looks after himself still aspires to the look of a man of thirty-five," he says. "The last thing he wants is to look fifty. And a sophisticated man of twenty aspires to the lifestyle of a man of thirty-five. Personally, I've decided I will always be thirty-five. It's a very good age."

—NICK SULLIVAN

HERE, THREE WAYS TO PUT MICHAEL INTO YOUR WARDROBE



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2. Leather jacket ($598), cotton vest ($70), cotton shirt ($70), and corduroy trousers ($70)



3. Shearling jacket ($598), wool-blend turtleneck ($198), and wool trousers ($118). All clothes: Michael by Michael Kors; michaelkors.com

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8



THE BENTLEY CONTINENTAL GT If Richard Serra decided to make something with wheels, it might look like the Bentley Continental GT. The car is pure sculpture: muscular, functional, endlessly elegant, and completely innovative. Its twelve-cylinder engine boasts a 190-mile-per-hour top speed, and the interior is the most refined of any car worth more than a hundred grand. While other luxury cars lavish you with shiny tricks, the Continental GT loves you back with pure artistry. $155,990. www.bentleymotors.com

AN OLD-SCHOOL LIGHTER There has to be something the digital revolution cannot touch. Like, say, fire. For the beautiful simplicity of striking a flame, we recommend Dunhill's Havana Shagreen lighter, which ups the ante on the Zippo by way of an easy flip and flick so luxurious and basic that you may consider smoking again. Because sometimes it's more enjoyable to go analog. $2,500. dunhill.com

9



A NEW PAIR OF SPECTACLES Your eyes may be shot to hell, but at least they don't have to look like it. For the four-eyes in all of us comes a new collection of ophthalmic eyewear by CK Calvin Klein, which uses superlightweight frames that are both durable and modernly stylish. The best part about them? At around a hundred dollars, they're affordable enough for you to own two or three pairs, allowing you to switch up your look for any occasion. $90 to $140. marchon.com

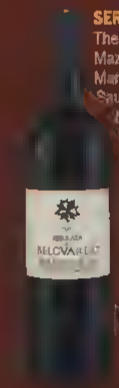
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A TASTE OF ITALY

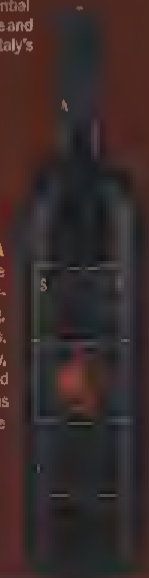
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TENUTA BELGUARDO
BELGUARDO is the property of Italy's Mazzei family, also owners of Castello di Fonterutoli in Chianti. The family was among the first to move into the Maremma area of Tuscany to plant and produce world-class wines. Tenuta Belguardo is the winery's top offering, a powerful blend of 70% Cabernet Sauvignon, 20% Sangiovese, and 10% Merlot. The Wine Spectator rated the 2001 vintage 94 points and wrote, "WOW. Rich and powerful, with intense aromas of crushed raspberry, blackberry, and a hint of wood. Full bodied and very rich in ripe tannins with a long, rich fruit finish."



SERRATA DI BELGUARDO
The Serrata di Belguardo is also made at Mazzei's BELGUARDO property in Maremma. Produced of 40% Cabernet Sauvignon, 40% Sangiovese, and 20% Merlot in a softer style that can be easily approached at a younger age due to its focus on ripe, round, fresh fruit character. The Serrata di Belguardo is a quintessential example of the fresh, modern world-class style of wine that can be made when combining regions with fantastic potential with the knowledge and understanding of Italy's best winemakers.



SPADINA UNA ROSA
SPADINA wines hail from the heart of Sicily, which is the largest grape growing region in Italy. Armed with a warm climate and a modern philosophy of enology and winemaking, SPADINA is making the world take notice of Sicilian wines. Made from the indigenous Nero D'Avola grape variety, SPADINA Una Rosa is rich in color with notes of full red and black fruit, and has an elegant and long spicy finish. Try this instead of a California Zinfandel for a change.



A TASTE OF ITALY

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ROC

Roc is an upscale Italian eatery with a kitschy décor style, with a ceiling chandelier surrounded by lamps resembling bulbcars. The food focus is Sorrento style seafood although many dishes are derived from all over Italy. Menu highlights include prosciutto with figs, the spinach and endive salad with bacon and lemon vinaigrette, and the numerous fish broth variations.

NOMI

NoMi has received rave reviews for its innovative cuisine and breath-taking views of Michigan Avenue and the Lake. The Lowe Park Hyatt Regency restaurant is beautifully designed by Tony Chi, featuring a stunning lounge and landscaped terrace. Menu highlights include the signature carnaroli risotto studded with wild forest mushrooms and crispy prosciutto and the chocolate mousse dome for dessert.

AGO

Ago's list of owner-investors includes renowned personalities such as actors Robert De Niro and Christopher Walken, Miramax executive producers Harvey and Bob Weinstein, and director Ridley Scott. As if that wasn't enough endorsement, chef Agostino Scicutin adds to the draw. This NY-style Italian eatery has been visited by guests such as Jerry Seinfeld, Jim Carrey, Rob Lowe, Michael Keaton, Ellen DeGeneres, and Bruce Willis. The spacious restaurant features Tuscan cuisine with menu highlights including upscale pastas, brick oven pizzas, risotto, and the chef's special bistecca alla fiorentina, a 20 oz. T-bone steak grilled at your table.

BE A FOOD AND WINE CRITIC

Send comments about the best part of your dining experience at one of the restaurants listed above, along with your favorite Italian wine from the previous page. You will be eligible to win one of the following: six grand prizes of dinner for two plus a case of fine William Grant & Sons wine, or one of 50 signed copies of Esquire's new book on simple entertaining for friends, Esquire Eats.

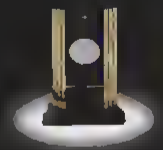
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In its debut in 2001, it received the year's Highest Rating by Cigar Aficionado's CIGAR insider



Also in 2001, it was named "Cigar of the Year" by EUROPEAN Cigar JOURNAL



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Who You Callin' Normal?

In which a clan of vodka-swilling bounty hunters from Long Island teams up with reality television to teach us an important lesson about ourselves



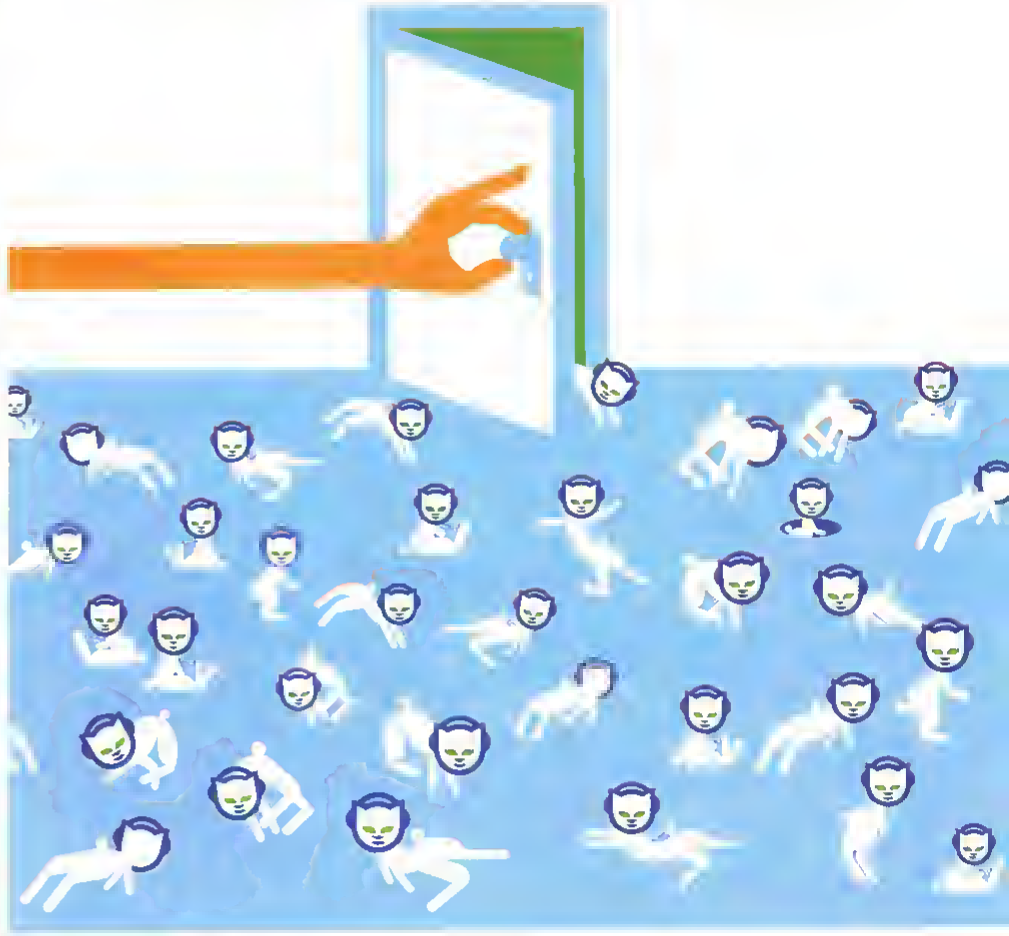
ILLUSTRATION BY EBBIE GUY

THIS IS GOING TO BE a column about reality TV. More specifically, it's going to be about a reality program called *Family Bonds*. And even more specifically, it's going to be about how we are in the midst of a golden age that is unprecedented in the history of television. However, in order to get into all this, I first need to mention the Michael Lewis book *Moneyball*, even though I have no intention of writing about baseball. But trust me. These things are connected. You just have to hang in there.

A few hours before watching the premiere of *Family Bonds*—a new HBO series that follows a Long Island family of bounty hunters who spend their free time drinking, having marathon sex, and piercing their nipples—I was reading *Moneyball* and finding myself obsessed with the insights of Billy Beane, the general manager of the Oakland A's. Beane built his ball club through an innovative, low-budget business model that contradicts almost every tenet of conventional baseball wisdom. One of Beane's assistants (a Harvard computer geek named Paul DePodesta, now the general manager of the L. A. Dodgers) outlined a theory that focused on three errors baseball scouts consistently commit when analyzing young talent. Two of his points are specific to the scouting process: DePodesta thinks old-school insiders have a tendency to focus too much on a) what they've observed directly with their own two eyes and b) whatever they've observed most recently (as opposed to what has proven to be true over the long haul). These are both sensible insights, and they're both things to consider the next time you're looking at a high school shortstop. However, DePodesta's third criticism of scouting is applicable not just to baseball but to all aspects of life: All too often, people make the mistake of viewing their own personal experience as typical. In baseball, this means scouts are drawn to young athletes who remind them of themselves. But this happens all the time, pretty much everywhere else. Humans tend to think that whatever happens to them is generally what happens to everybody and that their unique thoughts and feelings are somehow universal. In actuality, this is almost never true. Every person (especially the successful ones) inevitably experiences life in a way that is specific to him or her alone.

This fallacy—the fallacy of self-assumed normalcy—is central to the success of reality programming. The reason people find shows like *The Real World* and *The Apprentice* and *Survivor* so compelling is that they per-

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ceive the cast members to be surrogates for average citizens, all of whom are viewed as fundamentally alike. Because these are not fictional characters, audiences feel comfortable placing themselves into these on-screen scenarios and judging the participants' behavior against what they would do in the same situation. If you are a noncelebrity, you are inclined to unconsciously believe that you share certain unifying characteristics with *all* noncelebrities. This is how reality television generates comedy: We love seeing other "normal" people make decisions that we consider ridiculous. If a contestant on *The Bachelor* makes a seemingly inexplicable statement or an ill-fated choice, our immediate reaction is to think, What an idiot. Who acts like that? The answer is, of course, anyone who isn't you. And this is where DePudesta's point becomes trenchant. Since everyone views his or her own personal experience as normal, all other experiences seem bizarre (and thereby entertaining). Our self-assumed normalcy makes everyone else sad and interesting.

Which brings me to *Family Bonds*.

Family Bonds is HBO's most forthright attempt at reality programming, although certainly not its first (*G-String Divas* being my personal favorite). It's about the Evangelistas, a middle-class Italian-American family. The patriarch of the household, Tom, works as a bail bondsman, and everyone else in the clan helps out. Watching *Family Bonds* is like watching an especially humorous episode of *Cops*, except the law-enforcement agents seem like a combination of the Osbournes (if they weren't rich and British) and the Sopranos (if they weren't fictional and cool). I don't know anyone like the people on *Family Bonds*. Chain-smoking Tom is the last of that bygone generation of men who believe your father doesn't love you unless he occasionally beats you senseless. Tom's wife, Flo, is this huge-breasted, entirely likable blond who brags about having sex five times a night and buys her son vodka for his eighteenth birthday. Tom's nephew is a divorced, overweight doofus who lives on the family couch and appears to have a marginally serious drinking problem. Tom and Flo also have three kids of their own, and I can't relate to any of them. These people are all fucknuts.

And yet somehow they all seem vaguely familiar. While watching the first four episodes of *Family Bonds*, I kept seeing glimpses of people I don't remember hanging out with but must have met at least once. I didn't feel like I was watching a freak show, but nor did I feel like I was a voyeur of my own existence; it was somewhere in between. And as I watched those fascinatingly weird episodes of *Family Bonds*, and as I considered what *Moneyball* had suggested about the way baseball scouts erroneously view their own experience as normal, I started to understand what makes reality programming so watchable. It does not have the potential to get things wrong. That might seem like an all-too-obvious point—basically, I'm saying reality TV is watchable because it's real—but it's something that critics of the genre always overlook as they bemoan its popularity. A sitcom can get things wrong; sitcom characters may seem "normal," but their behavior is wholly speculative. Television dramas strive for realism, but—even when they work—the constructed plot dynamics have no authenticity. A show like *Family Bonds* can't guess at normalcy, even if that's its intention. Everything the Evangelistas do is *inherently* normal. Their world seems insane, but that's only because it's not. Every family in America—if cast in the context of a reality program—would come across as abnormal.

And that's why reality television is important.

Reality television is universally maligned for being vapid and uncreative, and everybody seems to think it's acceptable to admit to watching these programs only as a so-called guilty pleasure. Just about every smart person in 2004 agrees that this stuff is devoid of value. But there will be a day in the future when people think differently. There will be a day when this era of TV is remembered as groundbreaking and vital, because shows like *Family Bonds* will have destroyed the myth of normalcy. Reality TV will ultimately prove that there is no "normal" way to live, and it will validate the notion that every human experience is autonomous. And if that isn't more important than Ed Sullivan and *The Honeymooners*, I don't know what is. ■

The Kobe Verdict



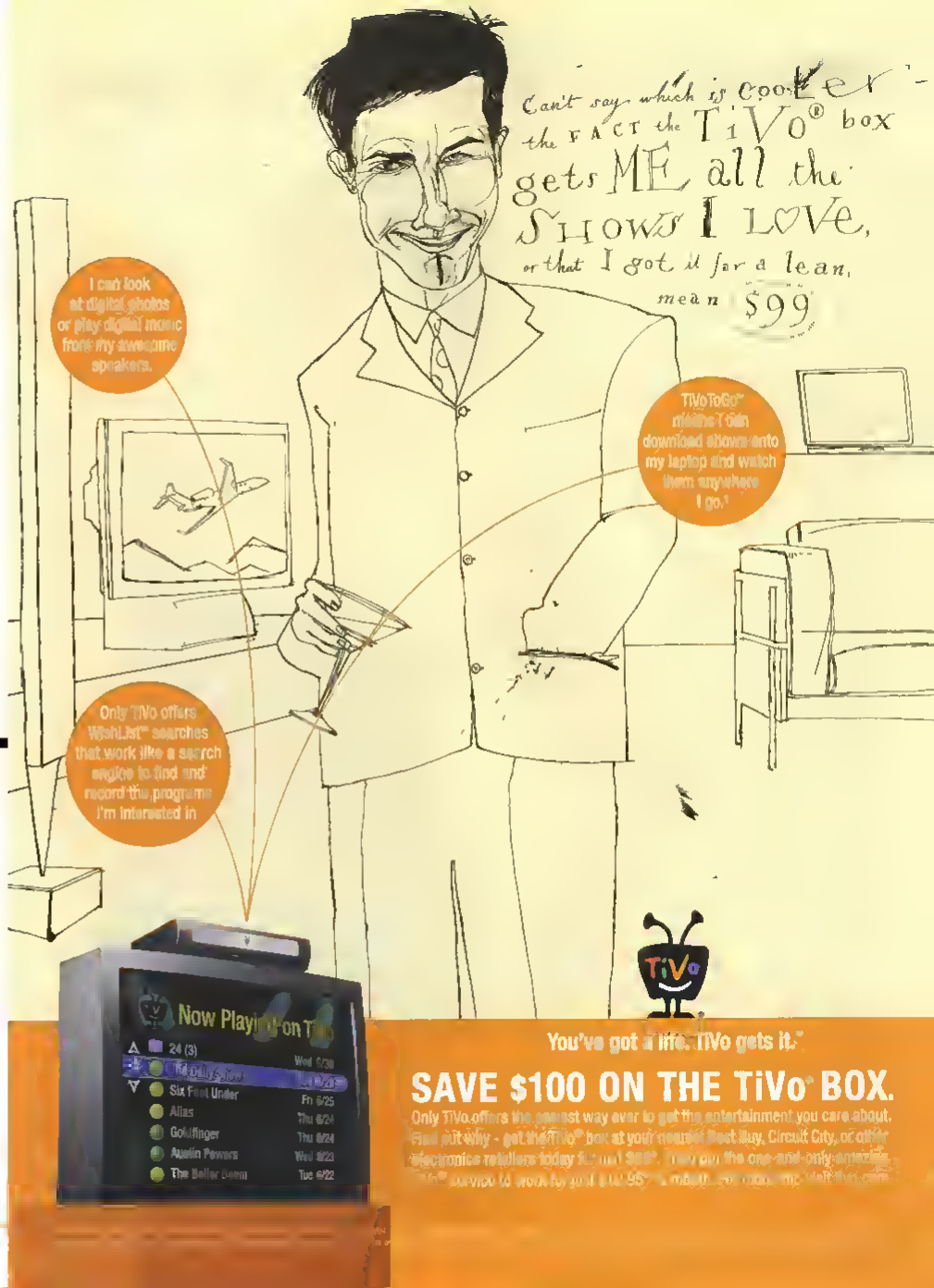
■ Bryant pleads his case.

» Last December, I wrote a column in this magazine claiming I would be able to use the NBA season as a way to understand the Kobe Bryant rape case—and that I would be able to deduce Kobe's guilt or innocence by watching him play basketball. Since the season is now complete, many people have asked for my conclusion. Well, it turns out that this was a little more complicated than I had anticipated (which I partially blame on Gary Payton for consistently ignoring the triangle offense). However, I want to note three things that seem important, and you can make your own decision from there.

1 Every time Bryant attended a court hearing in Colorado during the day and then flew to a Laker game that same evening, he played exceptionally well. On these occasions, he was publicly accused of rape *to his face*—and then he'd go out and destroy the opposition on the hardwood. If Kobe is found innocent, those posthearing games will forever brand him as the mentally toughest man in NBA history. However, if he is proven guilty, this probably means he is the worst human being alive.

2 During the conference finals against the Minnesota Timberwolves, I noticed Kobe patting Latrell Sprewell on the back after an accidental collision. They acted like old chums. This was curious, because it is well established that Bryant is somewhat aloof and does not have many close friends in the league (or even on his own team). But he clearly gets along with Spree. Does this mean he suddenly *relates* to Latrell? In 1997, Spree choked his coach, last year, in his first game at the Garden after New York traded him to Minnesota. Sprewell spent the entire game screaming at Knicks owner James Dolan. Granted, Sprewell had gone to great lengths to rebuild his image over the past few seasons, and he still goes to the rack like a cornrowed assassin. But if we are to consider Latrell Sprewell a character witness for Kobe, this hurts his case.

3 Early in the conference semifinals against the Spurs, there was a moment when Bryant was whistled for traveling. Even by NBA standards, this violation was obvious. Yet Bryant still complained about the call (which is even more egregious when one considers that Kobe—like all superstars—gets preferential treatment from most officials). This makes me wonder if Bryant understands the difference between right and wrong. Should the video footage of that traveling violation be admissible in court? Perhaps. Because what I find myself suspecting is that Kobe Bryant may very well be guilty, but he honestly *believes* he's innocent. And that's where things get complicated. —C. K.



Ten Things You Don't Know About Women

By Mariska Hargitay



1. We love the fact that it takes you only twelve minutes to get ready for anything, be it black tie or a basketball game. When it takes longer than that . . . what are you doing in there?

2. A good plan (i.e., dinner reservations) makes for a perfect evening; no plan (i.e., no dinner reservations) makes for a quick goodbye.

3. It's not the size of the bed that matters; it's the thread count.

4. Let us catch you looking at us.

5. No short shorts. Period.

6. Observations on the similarities between your mother and your girl should never actually leave your mouth. It's really best to keep those things to yourself.

7. If you think we want to kiss you, make us wait. If you're not sure, wait until you are. Waiting indicates a high erotic IQ.

8. We are all about our necks. Feel free to spend as much time there as you wish.

9. We love your creativity. We love your imagination. We want you to make us things—a collage, a book, a photo album. Or write a poem, or a letter, or a sentence. Be brave.

10. All we want is to be cherished and to know that you have our backs.

Mariska Hargitay *stars in* Law & Order: SVU *on NBC.*

Many more things you don't know about women: esquire.com/women

[yellow tail]





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now spotted outside australia.



Barry's Bats

Is Barry juiced? His bat certainly is—by some of the meanest wood on the continent. Barry's bats are made by Sam, and without Sam we might not be talking as much about Barry. BY CHRIS JONES

SAM HOLMAN WAS IN A HOTEL ROOM IN BOSTON when Barry called. It was August 2001, by Sam's best recollection, which even on the clearest mornings can be a little murky. Doesn't matter much. They were dog days anyhow.

He'd been killing an idle afternoon by watching Barry on TV, watching, in fact, Barry bounce three liners off the wall in nine innings. Already, Sam had done the math. He'd been telling Barry for some time that the bat he was using—Sam's bat, kiln-dried rock maple from Quebec, hand turned in Sam's garage in Ottawa and stained black and cherry by a former minor league catcher named Bill, whose right hand is now permanently cramped into a painter's fist—was too light. Not by much. Maybe a tenth of an ounce—a sheet of newsprint, a few leaves of grass. That was the difference between doubles off the wall and home runs, between a man in scoring position and immortality.

In some ways, they'd failed. Sam and Barry, together, had been working to make true this one thing since 1999, not long after Barry was introduced to Sam's homemade bats by Joe Carter, the first big leaguer to use one in a game (illegally, but successfully, hitting a first-at-bat home run against either Milwaukee or Kansas City, depending on which legend you're inclined to believe).

"No way I'm swinging a thirty-five-inch bat," Barry told Joe at the time, which Joe reported to Sam, who didn't offer the widest selection out of that garage of his. But Barry deigned to swing one the next spring in Arizona, accepting a bag of thirty four-inch lumber that Sam had carried three thousand miles to give him. Barry nodded and headed out to the cage, and Sam had butterflies in his gut, and Barry promptly sent all sorts of kids chasing all sorts of balls over the fence, which sent Sam's butterflies into his throat. Then Barry sat down with Sam in the dugout, and they spoke for an hour—not like old friends, nothing like that, but like professionals, like two men who figured out early in their

■ Sam visiting Barry in the Giants' dugout before a game in Montreal during Bonds's record-setting season in August 2001.

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acquaintance that each had something to take from the other. They talked about bats and craft and home runs, and Sam believes that Barry knew then, in the cool of the spring desert shade, that he was going to make history with Sam's bat.

Knew until August 2001 or thereabouts, when Sam was sitting in a hotel room in Boston—or was it New York?—and Barry was bouncing liners off the wall. That's when the doubt began creeping in. And that's when they talked again, and Barry agreed to let Sam add that tenth of an ounce to Barry's bat, lifting the chisel off the round a half second earlier than Sam had been instructed to before, a half second that would make all the difference in the world, only a little too late.

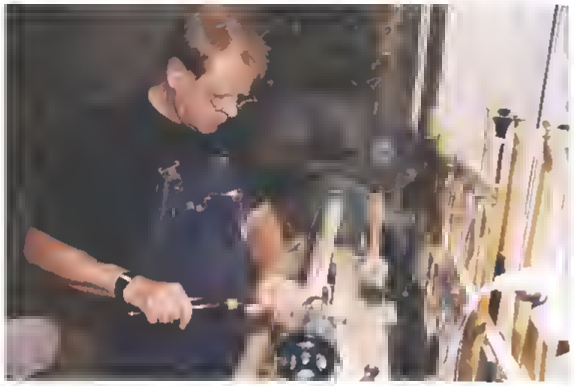
"People always ask me about Barry's seventy-three home runs and whether the record will stand the test of time," Sam says today, sitting on a pub patio in his dusted overalls and wearing the number, literally, on his sleeve. "I tell 'em, Nope. Because Barry could have hit seventy-six."

Open flame scares him, and so does sawdust fine enough to spark. So do hitting slumps and fickle equipment managers and pitches hard and in on the hands. And future record snappers, too. All of those things conspire against him, waking him up at night, running high against the hope that every one of us harbors, that he's built something to last, first in the fists of that one great player who comes along once in a generation and then in some museum somewhere, under glass, unbreakable.

Sam's bats are in the Smithsonian and they are in the Hall of Fame, and because his bats are made out of maple, the ones still in circulation have a good chance of lasting as long as they did as trees. He reminds himself of that whenever he misreads the wood in his lathe and it lashes out at him as if a current ran through it.

For the most part, the maple has been good to him, giving him an edge on all the big sporting-goods companies that rested on hokum like "Powerized," and baseball's old matchstick world. But the maple has also tested Sam, nipping hard at his patience and fingers. (It flat-out ate a couple belonging to his brother-in-law, who now keeps his distance from the unfinished product, instead stamping the names of the players on their shiny new bats.) If wood could be said to have a personality, maple'd be petulant. Hellion petulant.

Its relative density is the difference. On a hardness scale of one to five, with one being yellow pine and five being as close as wood gets to steel, maple is just about the only thing shipped in board feet that'd be worth a five. That's better than ash (a four, say, along with oak and walnut), which is what Louisville Sluggers have always been made out of, and which is why the average player will go through them by the dozen, while Sam ships out his orders in boxes of six. And it's better than elm, which is diseased, and hemlock, which is bowed, and birch, which is so pliable that even the thinnest sheets of ice weigh it down in winter.



Sam at work: Once, Mo Vaughn's 36-inch, 36-ounce monster was the giant of Sam's factory; now it's Alfonso Soriano's 35-33.

But maple, for all its powers, is demanding, and it's expensive, and yeah, it's petulant, especially if you look at it wrong.

Not a lot of difference, then, in how Sam sees maple and how we see Barry and how the future, ultimately, might have seen them both.

Except.

Sam keeps two bats opposite the big stone fireplace in his living room. One is a Mizuno Pro, one of the few soulless things the Japanese will make out of wood. This particular Mizuno Pro was churned out for Eric Davis, it's conventional in shape, natural in finish, with Davis's number written in black marker inside the cup. There's not one thing remarkable about it, apart from the obscure incantations running down its length, also written in black marker but in a surer hand, in big, dramatic block letters, like an architect's handwriting on blueprints. FLARE HANDLE, it reads in one spot, 34-32 in another. It's meaningless stuff, until Sam holds up the other bat, with a familiar black-and-cherry finish and different inscriptions written in the same hand. TO SAM- NO 548 8-18-01 BARRY BONDS. "This," Sam says, holding up his bat, "came from this," now holding up the Mizuno. "This is what we did."

Sam's bat, Barry's bat—their bat—has been fine-tuned like a harp. The handle is something like an inch thick, on the thick end of the handle spectrum, the knob is more than two inches across, almost twice what's normal. The barrel is fat, too, but the maple is the best of the best, good enough that Sam can carve its thirty-four-inch length down to just less than thirty-two ounces despite its volume. The handle is further bolstered with white tape, first in circles that erase any kind of seam between the handle and the knob, and then in a crisscross pattern, the way Barry tapes every one of his bats, because he leaves nothing to accident.

The date above the signature, August 18, 2001, is also telltale, dating the bat to some-



time after that dog day spent in a Boston hotel and after a phone conversation that changed baseball history. Barry hit the 548th home run of his career with this bat, one of those seventy three home runs he hit over the course of that record season. This bat's been places.

But more telling than all of that is the signature smudged under the more usual autograph like a covered-up tattoo. If you hold the bat up under a light, you'll see a ripple in its surface, in the two layers of clear coat and in the stain and even in the wood. What you'll see—what you'll almost never see on another player's bat, especially on another player's maple bat—are the impressions left by the stitches of a baseball.

This is not more fogged-up memory and this is not myth. Barry Bonds—no matter how much you want to forget about him or how much juice he's sucked back or how long he'll be dogged by the feds or how long his records will last—has hit baseballs hard enough to dent rock maple, the same rock maple that Sam has used to make strip flooring that a fat woman in stilettos can't dimple. He's hit baseballs so hard that even when the lines in the books have been erased and the fans have given their love to some new king, the bat, Sam's bat, will remember.

This, for Sam, is no small thing, which is why he's still awake some nights, still tinkering, still building, still looking for new ways to shore up his legacy. Everything else is subject to change. His rock maple is now logged out of New York instead of Quebec—American maple has less heartwood in it, and heartwood has no life—and he's switched the bat's model number from B1 to 2K1, just to help remind us what happened when.

The more important change is in the number of players who call Sam looking for thirty-four-inch, thirty-two-ounce bats, stained black and cherry. (The number of players is now something like 140, the color combination is now known as "Bonds.") That, and they can't catch Sam at his garage anymore. They have to catch him at his thirteen-man factory, at the converted tavern with the tin ceilings on Rochester Street, that brick joint with the sawdust and wood shavings piled up on the sills like fake window-display snow. In 1997, his first year, Sam made 850 bats—of that much he's sure (give or take). This year, he'll turn out 15,000, maybe 20,000, maybe a few thousand more. Who knows?

It helps that he still makes a really, really good bat—at $129 each, the most expensive wooden bat in the world, retail. He buys whole logs now—Sam's becoming a lumber baron, too, these days—and mills them into twelve-foot-long squares that he dries himself, racking them in a vacuum kiln the size of a boxcar in a warehouse over in Quebec. It gets hot in there, and you can hear the water and the sap running out of the wood and into the drain, a four-day process that wrings out the maple like nature never could. Next the squares are cut down to thirty-six-inch lengths—the biggest bat Sam has ever had to make was Mo Vaughn's thirty-six-inch, thirty-six-ounce monster, now that Vaughn's gone, Alfonso Soriano's thirty-five, thirty-three is the giant standard—which are hauled back over the river and turned into rounds, which are then taken to the factory on Rochester Street and sorted into what Sam calls his library.

This is his greatest art. Sam was a stagehand for most of his adult life, he was past fifty when he started making bats, but he'd always worked with wood. Go down to the Mayflower Pub and you'll still see him sitting over in the corner on summer evenings, sanding away at a toy plane or a car. All of those lost hours have left him able to look at wood and see its one best purpose, he can see the final shape it's meant for. Density, weight, grain—he takes all of it in and files the rounds into the sorting bins that line his factory's north wall. Then they're shaved down into a basic form by machine before someone—not so much Sam anymore, more likely Trevor or Andy—slips them onto a lathe and runs a chisel along their length, turning the excess into dust. Now there is a knob and a handle and a barrel. All of these are sanded (more dust) and the knob is dimpled and the barrel is cupped (more dust) and the entire thing is stained (more cramping) before receiving a logo and bearing a name (no more fingers) and shined up under those two layers of clear coat.

Every bit of it helps.

It helps, too, that Sam's bats are beautiful—rich and good-smelling like fine furniture—the sort of thing that humbles you into handling it gently just by the way it looks.

And it helps most of all that the one great player of this generation is still making history with it, carrying it up past Mays on his way past Ruth, past Aaron. To immortality.

Because as much as Sam means to Barry—because we might not be so consumed by Barry these days if not for this one true thing—Barry means more to Sam. He means that a new, larger factory is just around the corner. He means that Wilson—one of those big sporting-goods companies that Sam got the better of—now puts its name on Sam's bats and, in exchange, will put Sam's bats in a bunch more fists. He means that Sam's bats have finished the normally long, slow journey into museums in double-quick time, where they're kept under glass that will soon be smudged with a million fingerprints, the ripples of long-gone baseballs tattooed onto a million memories.

All of which means that their bat, unlike just about everything else in life, has been built to last.

The bat is unbreakable. The bat is fact. The bat is the record. ■

WANTED:
The Original Sam Bat

» The first bat that Sam ever manufactured—the prototype for the thousands that would follow—is missing. And Sam will pay to get it back.

The original Sam Bat was last seen in Williamsport, Pennsylvania, where Sam had taken it in August 1997 to seek approval for its use by Little League baseball. Driving home, he realized he'd left it behind, and somehow, it disappeared.

Now it's sitting in a garage or under a kid's bed or being used to stir moonshine in some Poconos still. But it's somewhere, and Sam's offering up a lifetime supply of Sam Bats in exchange for its safe return.

It's a distinctive piece of hardware: cut to an odd length (just less than thirty-three and three quarters inches), heavy (maybe thirty-three ounces), with a flared handle and SAM BAT handwritten in black marker on its barrel. It's probably beat up some, too—the bat's early life was spent with the Triple-A Ottawa Lynx, who passed it among themselves like a torch—but like all old, good things, still plenty beautiful.

Sightings should be reported to Sam directly, at bats@sambat.com. —C. J.

bats@sambat.com | bats@sambat.com | bats@sambat.com | bats@sambat.com | bats@sambat.com | bats@sambat.com | bats@sambat.com



The King Who Can't Be Killed

Michael Eisner's amazing staying power is due in part to his uncanny eye for "successors" who can't succeed

BY KIM MASTERS



ONE EVENING back in 1996, Michael Ovitz went to a three-hour private dinner in New York with Disney executive Bob Iger and his wife. According to Ovitz, then suffering through a term as Disney's president that still lives in infamy, Iger complained bitterly about his boss, chief executive Michael Eisner—specifically "how difficult it was for him to work with Mr. Eisner because Mr. Eisner was micromanaging him."

Concerned that Iger might leave the company, Ovitz decided to offer a gift. "It was a very inexpensive watch," said Ovitz: a Breguet Aéronavale. Gold would have cost around $14,900, but Ovitz got Iger the stainless steel, which costs about $7,000 (and Ovitz boasted that he got it for less than $4,000).

That watch—which Iger still wears—would become one of Ovitz's few lasting contributions to Disney. To Ovitz, though, it represented one of many bargains that he struck for the company. He remembered it during a two-day deposition he gave last fall in connection with another of his legacies to Disney: a shareholder lawsuit, still in court, contending that the Disney board dozed while Eisner expensively hired and then fired his erstwhile buddy.

Imagine the dinner that Ovitz and Iger could have together now—the only two men to serve in the number-two job at Disney since the demise of Frank Wells in a helicopter crash in 1994. Imagine them as a kind of two-man support group, talking about the ongoing effects of Eisner's management style: a shareholder revolt led by former board members Roy Disney and Stanley Gold, the looming loss of animation powerhouse Pixar, a high-profile feud with Miramax cochairmen Harvey and Bob Weinstein. How they might marvel together that despite all the odds, Michael Eisner is still in control.

In truth, Eisner has had only one truly credible number-two man in his twenty years at Disney. Since Wells died, the succession question has been fairly constant. If it had an answer, in fact, Eisner probably would not have had such amazing staying power.

It's hard to know whether Eisner acted in good faith in 1995 when he brought in superagent Ovitz, certainly, Ovitz now believes Eisner did not. That experiment ended after only fourteen humiliating months. (Eisner later confided to a colleague that he had never understood the notion of regretting a marriage even while walking down the aisle until he hitched himself to Ovitz.)

After Ovitz was canned, the number-two job was left unfilled until 2000, when Eisner promoted former ABC chief Iger to the job. In many ways, Iger was perfect for Eisner's purposes: charming, smooth, and seriously nonthreatening. He looks and sounds like a CEO, and the fact that Wall Street never really bought him as a potential successor to Eisner has made him completely ideal.

Like Eisner, Iger has survived by defying the odds. For years now, he's been responsible for one of Disney's most pressing and visible problems: ABC. The network's troubles became especially public in the spring, when the top programming executives were fired shortly before they were supposed to unveil the fall schedule. Entertainment division chairman Lloyd Braun was first to go, he and Iger had clashed bitterly, and toward the end Braun was no longer discreet about it.

In March, *The New York Times* published an article outlining how Braun had been thwarted last year in his effort to put *The*

■ Disney president Bob Iger (left, with Eisner): "He's in a horrible position," says a company insider. "You can't do that job well and publicly and not be assassinated by Michael."



Apprentice on ABC's schedule. (Late-night host Jimmy Kimmel later joked that the show's signature moment—"You're fired!"—was too close to home for the network.) The article irked Iger and pushed Braun toward the precipice. But it also cemented the perception that decision-making at ABC is hampered by constant interference from on high.

Though no one disputes that Eisner and Iger micromanage the network, even Iger's bitterest enemies concede that he hardly deserves the whole blame for blowing the *Apprentice* deal. Still, he presides over a system that is slow and unwieldy and has sapped the authority of the network chief—or chiefs. A representative of a major talent tells a story of trying to transact a deal that was "near and dear" to the hearts of the former ABC executives, Braun and network president Susan Lyne. But they told him they had no authority to act, the representative says. He called Iger and found him unresponsive. The frustrated negotiator talked again with Braun, who told him, "Now you know why this place is the way it is. We have no authority to make decisions. Bob Iger disappears. . . . If it's wrong, he has me to blame. If it goes well, he takes the credit."

In the end, Braun didn't get his wish to last one day longer than Iger. Having pushed Braun out, Iger assured Lyne that she would get Braun's job. Oops. There was a problem in the form of Eisner favorite Stephen McPherson, who was running Disney's television-production unit and was considered a hot ticket for a top programming job. (He developed the future powerhouse *CSI* at Disney but couldn't manage to sell it to Disney's own network.)

Sources at the network say that McPherson refused to report to Lyne. Having been frustrated in his dealings with her, he made his move. Over a weekend, Eisner is said to have decided that McPherson would get the programming crown and Lyne would have to go. Iger had to deliver the news. Even in pitiless Hollywood, people recoiled at the ugly denouement.

Things stayed ugly during the subsequent search for a fall programming lineup. Iger, having vowed publicly to leave McPherson to set his own schedule, didn't. There was a committee that included Eisner, Iger and consultant and former network head Fred Silverman—who subsequently quit—among others. By several accounts, a pitched battle raged until the last minute. McPherson had to make concessions, giving up, for example, on his idea of programming a block of reality shows on Wednesday nights. The result, once again, says an ABC veteran, is a schedule built by committee.

Still, Iger can now blame McPherson if the fall season turns out poorly. But Iger's survival comes with its own curse. "He's in a horrible position," says a former network insider. "You can't do that job well and publicly and not be assassinated by Michael. He has to stay under the radar. As a result, he looks like a gray guy who has no opinions."

Of course, many feel that Iger was born for the role. And at Disney, at least until the board defines the limit of Eisner's term, the gray man is arguably irreplaceable.

Which brings us happily back to Michael Ovitz, who is not a gray guy. In fact, Hollywood has become a lot grayer since he vanished from the scene. But documents that have emerged in connection with the shareholder suit make it clear that Ovitz never had one meaningful minute as president of Disney. In fact, Ovitz's account of working for the man he once considered his best friend is alternately so harrowing and self-aggrandizing that it's hard to decide whom to pity more, him or Eisner.

The two-day session with Ovitz was tense and punctuated with edgy and sometimes unintentional humor. "I learned my first lesson at the Walt Disney Company about not being able to trust my associates," Ovitz said, adding, "Everybody was in each other's pants. I mean, business."

He recounted how, during his struggles at Disney, he went on a Thanksgiving cruise with his "friend" and board member Gary Wilson. He told Wilson his troubles aboard a yacht that they owned together. Only during the deposition did Ovitz learn that Wilson had passed details of their conversation to Eisner, who took notes. One was read to Ovitz. "Attitude in general equals 'wounded animal in a corner.'"

Ovitz was obviously stunned. "I resent this beyond comprehension," he said. "[Wilson] should not be, you know, talking behind my back. . . . This is really wrong. I'm not even sure this is legal."

Acknowledging that he's now unemployed, Ovitz testified in his deposition that he had been more than just a superagent when he was hired to be president of Disney. At that time, he said, be "probably, behind Mr. Eisner, knew more about theme-park operations than anyone else working in the business"—information that comes as news to pretty much everyone in the industry.

Given all that he had to offer, Ovitz said he was astonished in an early meeting at Eisner's house when the then-top Disney executives—consigliere Sandy Litvack and chief financial officer Steve Bollenbach—strenuously refused to report to him. Their

Can My Dog Run NBC Better than Jeff Zucker?



» Jeff Zucker turned the *Today* show around and he also probably did better on his SATs than I did. But that's not the issue. I think my dog can program NBC better than Zucker, Kevin Reilly, and their highly paid team can. And I'm gonna prove it.

Yesterday I laid out all the scripts of NBC's pilots across my living-room floor. Then I invited my dog, Iggy, a nine-month-old terrier mix, to select the schedule. "C'mon, program NBC, be a good boy." Here, his findings. —BRADEN MATTHEWS

Iggy's Thoughts on NBC's New Lineup

***The Office*:** Iggy dropped a slobber-covered pig's ear on this Americanized version of the British sitcom slated for midseason. Good point. Ig. You'd think NBC would have learned after the *Coupling* disaster. My mutt cocked his head as if to ask, "If people really hate the sound of English accents that much, couldn't you just dub the British version with people from Brooklyn?"

***Father of the Pride*:** Iggy fell asleep on it. I guess he doesn't believe that lions can talk. And if they could, they wouldn't waste their speech on that dialogue.

***Average Joe*, part 3:** The premise: Can a drop-dead-gorgeous woman fall for an ordinary-looking guy? Apparently not. Iggy threw up on my *Average Joe* folder.

Iggy's NBC Lineup

(All his choices are shelved pilots.)

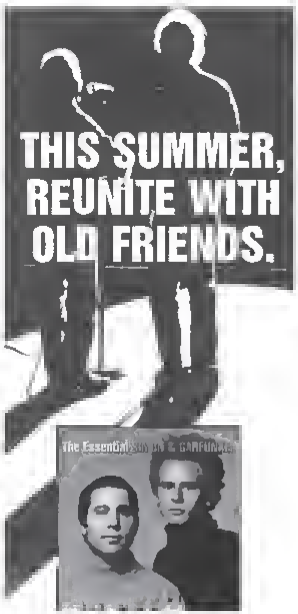
***Beverly Hills S.U.V.*:** Humped it. From the creator of *The Bernie Mac Show*, this is like *Glengarry Glen Ross*. But with cars. And Iggy loves cars.

***The Friendlys*:** Iggy licked it. The Dave Foley/Ana Gasteyer sitcom about a family-run candy company contains lines like "I'm Bebe, your father's last wife. He died inside of me." Well, it's better than any line on *Good Morning Miami* ever.

***My 11:30*:** Iggy wagged his tail for Jeff Goldblum as a playboy in therapy. It's got good ass jokes. That Iggy loves asses. And he owns *The Fly* on DVD.

NOTE TO NBC: Iggy is available for next fall's development meetings.





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tone, he said, was "disrespectful." Ovitz said Eisner had assured him that everyone would report to him. (In his own deposition, Eisner disputed this.)

To Ovitz, it was baffling that Eisner didn't back him up. Litvack (now a lawyer in private practice) and Bollenbach (now CEO of Hilton) were just suits, he said, far more "replaceable" than "guys like me or Eisner ... or people that were brought up in the creative side of the business."

Meanwhile, he said, Litvack "went out of his way to make my life at that company miserable." Ovitz went on to describe Litvack's role: "heavy lifting, hatchet man, Cardinal Richelieu." Eisner's account was that Litvack had wanted the number-two job himself and saw Ovitz as a "wicked stepmother."

From the start, Eisner's "search" for a second-in-command appears to have been an exercise in personal control. The lawsuit alleges that Eisner hired Ovitz despite the reservations of his top executives and Disney's biggest shareholder at that time, Sid Bass, who had hired Eisner in the first place. But according to the suit, the decision was approved by the board in short order. For example, Sidney Poitier, then a board member, agreed to Ovitz's employment during a brief call placed to his yacht, which was then off the coast of Sardinia, where it was the middle of the night. When the board did discuss Ovitz, one member said he saw the matter as a "done deal" because Eisner had already sent out a press release announcing the appointment.

As Ovitz was making clumsy and desperate efforts to establish himself at Disney, Eisner was compiling a list of grievances. Most of these should have been entirely predictable to anyone who had ever met Ovitz. But Eisner's complaints didn't just include Ovitz's imperial and imperious ways—his $2 million-plus office renovation, his fleet of assistants that outnumbered Eisner's, his tone deafness to the culture of a publicly held company—he also said Ovitz failed with Disney's music business, which he was assigned to fix.

Ovitz clearly had thought this would give him an opportunity to shine. As an agent, Ovitz had ushered Sony and Matsushita into buying studios that wound up costing them a packet. And Ovitz now tried to use his relationship with the Japanese to lead Eisner to what Ovitz contended was a sweet deal: buying half of Sony's music division. Ovitz said he had inside information that then Sony president Nobuyuki Idei had a thing for Disney. "I thought we might be able to—and please don't take this out of context—use that to the advantage of shareholders," he said, adding that "once [the Japanese] get obsessed with something, it's distinctly possible that you can turn it into something that would be to the advantage of the company."

Nevertheless, he said, Eisner refused to cough up something less than $3 billion for half of Sony Music. "We were in a catch-22," Ovitz said. "Michael didn't want to spend money for artists even if I could get them at a discount, and he didn't want to do any kind of merger or acquisition. ... It was very hard to try to build something without building blocks."

Ovitz also said Eisner arranged things so that he rarely got to speak at board meetings. Before long, Ovitz felt a chill. Talking to Roy Disney, he said, "was like talking to an ice cube." Ovitz remembered a television appearance with Eisner in September 1996 that was meant to counter rumors of friction. "Even when we went on *Larry King* together, he never came out and took my back, ever. Ever," Ovitz said. "He would say that he would do it, but he didn't do it. ... There was no chemistry in the interview. He didn't even look at me a lot of the time." In his deposition, Eisner said he'd already decided to get rid of Ovitz by then.

The lawsuit is grinding on, and if there is no agreement, there are likely to be more awkward disclosures at the trial scheduled for October. At a time when Eisner is already under fire, such disclosures might be costly. But a source who witnessed the ugly events of recent months says the only time Eisner seemed truly rattled was on the day that Comcast made its tender offer. And that offer has been withdrawn.

Eisner might even score some points in the months ahead. Disney might get Pixar back; Pixar chief Steve Jobs will probably hold off on a decision as long as possible in the hope that Eisner will finally step on that fatal land mine. But if that doesn't happen, Jobs might just hold his nose and make the deal. Then there's Miramax. Harvey Weinstein and his brother, Bob, may have tried to antagonize him in every way, and then scored big with *Fahrenheit 9/11*, but Eisner held all the cards.

There really is something marvelous about Michael Eisner. He dissed Roy Disney. He alienated Pixar. His coffin is studded like a leather-man thong, yet he lives. One day, perhaps soon, that last nail will go in. And when it does, though few will miss him, Hollywood will be a grayer place. ■



{Sex}

[BY STACEY GRENROCK WOODS]



■ You've got questions. She's got answers.



■ I have a large penis. How can I convey this information to women who are interested in such things without sounding like, well, a big dick?

I can't promise anything, but I might be able to get you one of David Lee Roth's old unitards. In the meantime, I advise that you remain mum about your endowment, even if you are simply bursting at the seams to tell someone. It's best to let your reputation spread naturally, by sleeping with lots of women within a ten-mile radius.

In my youth, masturbating used to be really pleasurable. Now that I'm older, taking matters into my own hands isn't quite as rewarding. Have I changed? And how can I get back to good masturbation?

Yes, my son, you have changed. Change is inevitable. The caterpillar becomes a butterfly. Madonna becomes Esther. Do you follow? Good. Now get yourself some surgical gloves and a banana peel. Sometimes a few simple props may be all you need to get out of your rut and back into a different rut. The Web site jackinworld.com offers innovative solutions for men like you—men who probably haven't done any serious prison time and need a little creative push or pull. You'll learn how to master the aforementioned glove technique, as well as others like the Milker, the Pillow Pumper, the Lube-Filled Condom, the Banana Man, and the Mattress Sandwich. Now that takes care of the physical sensations, but the ennui is all in your head. "Fantasy is an important element of sexual arousal and pleasure," says Howard I. Glazer, clinical professor of psychiatry at Cornell University Medical College, who suggests you "work on creating rich fantasies to accompany your masturbation." Indeed, it may be time to punch up those old fantasies. Instead of Shannon Tweed in a Ford Festiva at the chanty car wash, try a Chrysler Crossfire with Lindsay Lohan.

Let's be honest here. One reason that men enjoy getting sex advice from a woman is that we can imagine having sex with her while learning about how we should be having sex—with her. Your thoughts?

I want to thank you for your honesty and tell you I completely understand the feelings of longing you're having for Oxygen's Sue Johanson. However, now that you've exposed the secret "sex sells" formula to the public, I fear the jig is up. You are a formidable adversary, inspector. That coda was supposed to be uncrackable!

Is it true that oysters make you horny? What about chocolate and green M&M's? Are there any other food aphrodisiacs I should know about?

Don't believe everything your parents told you. There are no true aphrodisiacs known at this time. Food in general stimulates our senses of smell and taste, which sets off a chain reaction. "When these external stimuli are processed by the brain, they are indexed against our catalog of memories [which are] linked with the emotions that were present when the memories were cataloged," explains Dr. Brent W. Bost, author of *The Hurried Woman Syndrome*. "This subliminal linkage may also occur between food and sex." Tell me about it. To this day, I can't pass a churro cart without thinking about that night I spent in Tijuana with a certain Mr. Nick Nolte. (*Recuérdeme, mi corazón!*)

However, there are certain foods that do contain properties that contribute to overall sexual health. The Institute for Optimum Nutrition in Great Britain, the HQ of sexy food, has designed a menu for optimum horniness. Included are your beloved oysters, because they are high in zinc, which is necessary for sperm production. Good-quality dark chocolate, also included, contains phenylethylamine, a neurotransmitter that is boosted when people are in love. Also on the menu are grilled figs for their muscle-relaxing magnesium, and brown-rice pilaf, which forms the histamine necessary for the "flush of orgasm" (and because nothing gets people hot like pilaf). There's been a lot of talk lately about a natural product called yohimbine, which comes from the bark of an African tree. Yohimbine has been shown to increase sexual performance in male rats, but that's about all that's known. In my opinion, if you kids would leave the rats alone and stop grilling figs and vandalizing African trees, you might have more interest in sex. Now get off my lawn.

Got a sex question of your own? Send it to asquire.com/talk.



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ILLUSTRATION BY JOHN CUNEO

The Restless Man

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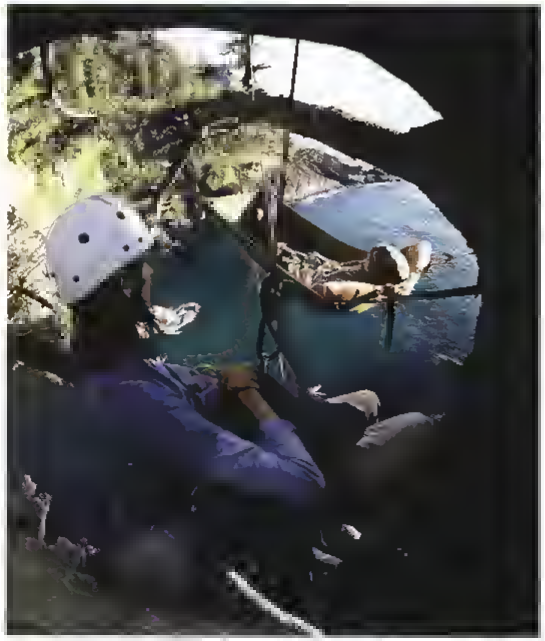
By **JAMES VLAHOS**

These trees are on steroids. They suck the sog that flushes over mushrooms, moss, ferns, frogs, sticks, muck, and millions of dead bugs. It's sextuple-strength Miracle-Gro, an arboreal smoothie with tetrahydrogestrinone boosters. No wonder the trees in this old-growth forest—a wind-protected pocket west of Roseburg, Oregon—come in three sizes: huge, huger, and *holy shit!*

I'm picking my way down a slick slope gingerly, for this is no mere walk in the woods. With thirty pounds of rope on my back and a compound bow in my right hand, I could be traipsing to a Renaissance fair or hunting Ewoks. Instead, along with guide Scott Altenhoff and botanist Billy Ellyson, I'm searching for what just might be the tallest Douglas fir on the planet—an obese vegetable higher than the Statue of Liberty, two Shaqs, and twenty-seven casino-grade poker chips. Once we find this monster, we aim to climb it, from sodden roots to swaying canopy. The very thought is dizzying.

The guys are already busy when I arrive in a clearing. Ellyson, a buff Jim Carrey type with sharp cheekbones and floppy hair, is darting about like a kid on an Otter Pop bender. Every few feet, he stops to aim a laser range finder into the heights. Big-tree enthusiasts are the Gore-Tex-clad cousins of stamp collectors, ever on the prowl for rare and exemplary specimens.

Altenhoff, thirty-seven, is a study in Cobain casual: flannel shirt, pants with zip-off legs, baseball cap, beard. Right now, he's all business. This could be because we can't find the Doug fir he spot



■ Camping out arboreal style: nestled in a sc[illegible] two hundred feet above crashing waves

PHOTOGRAPH BY MARI GAMBA

I HAVE MADE MY OWN RULES
I HAVE SAILED THE ATLANTIC.
I HAVE BEEN HUMBLED.
I HAVE FAITH.
I HAVE ALWAYS PUT FRIENDS AND FAMILY FIRST.

ARE YOU PRIVILEGED?

Hennessy Privilege VSOP COGNAC





■ Left: Guide Scott Altenhoff inches back up after rappelling to the forest surf. Above: He uses a compound bow to place his line high in a fir

ted two years ago, without the assistance of a range finder, he had it figured at 320 feet. Or it could be because today marks the debut of his official-sounding Pacific Tree Climbing Institute, though unofficially he's been guiding neophytes for years. "We've been working to secure liability insurance, and as of today, it's active," he told me an hour ago. I'm client zero, financially free to free-fall.

We parked this morning on a Bureau of Land Management dirt road a few miles northwest of the Camas Valley, and Ellyson and Altenhoff loaded backpacks with the hippie-medieval tools of their trade—a crossbow, grappling hooks, an Aerobie, Gu. Now, Altenhoff pulls out a compound bow mounted with a fishing reel. He loads a rubber-tipped arrow, aims at the highest tree we can find, and pulls the drawstring. *Sproing!* The arrow, trailing fluorescent fishing line, arcs 240 feet up, then over a limb. After a dozen more shots—placement, over a solid branch inches from the trunk, is critical—Altenhoff gets one he likes. Ellyson finds and unties the arrow, then attaches the fishing line to what looks like a clothesline. Surely we're not entrusting our lives to this? We're not. Altenhoff reels the clothesline up into the canopy and back down, then ties it to a climbing rope. Ellyson mirrors the process to draw the rope into the tree. The ends are tied off at ground level to nearby trees, and we're set.

Altenhoff goes first, clearing out dead limbs. Climber falling from tree generally not a problem. Tree falling on climber

Well, strap your helmets on tight, boys. Altenhoff rigs a second rope so that Ellyson and I can ascend side by side. Wearing a harness with a padded seat, I take an ascender in each hand. They look like staple guns, attach directly to the climbing rope, and connect, by straps, back to my harness. They are designed, Ellyson promises, to slide up the line, never down. Simple enough. I start working them skyward, my feet inserted in toe loops. There's a lot of swearing and grunting, but after twenty minutes of effort, I'm [illegible] nowhere, really, dangling like an Italian salami six feet above the ground.

"Think inchworm," Ellyson says. "Concentrate on reaching straight up the line." He demonstrates a sit-stand, sit-stand technique and moves rapidly upward. I try his method, and it works. Salami Oh-One Niner to Mission Control: We have liftoff.

God's voice booms down from unseen heights. Altenhoff wants us to pick up the pace—it's getting late. I pass thirty feet, then forty. There's a hemlock parked inconveniently beside our fir. Dammit, nature! I zigzag up through the branches, getting scraped by bark and bitch-slapped by bows, and it's not until I clear the top that I realize where I am. My toes are tickling space inches *above* a ninety-footer I could plop the star atop the National Christmas Tree. From the ground, everything had been foreshortened. Up here, a Silly Putty imprint of the world has been stretched impossibly. After a couple hours of heart-rate-spiking ascension—I've undertaken the arboreal equivalent of kayaking a Class V river my first time in a boat—we top out at 230 feet and watch twilight settle over the forest.

THAT NIGHT in our roadside camp, sipping Tecate and eating hibachi-grilled salmon, I ask about the record-height tree that wasn't—the range finder logged nothing

How to Experience This Adventure

CONTACT pinecone harvester-turned-climbing guide Scott Altenhoff (541-461-9410), who will give you an arboreal tour of Oregon for $250 per day.

FLY into Eugene. Rent a car or, better yet, mooch a ride from Altenhoff.

DRIVE seventy-five miles south to Highway 42. The tallish trees along the road? You'll climb giants four times as high. Head west to Tenmile, then take the dirt road northwest. Tree tour, part two. Drive I-5 north to Salem, then west on Highways 22 and 18.

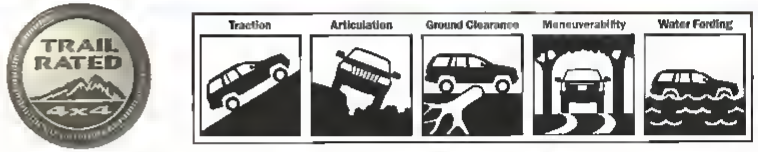
CAMP Billy Bob–style roadside, or in a high-altitude hammock.

GO late spring through early fall. September's best: less heat and no mosquitoes.



MAP BY JOHN GRIMWADE





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THE Restless MAN

TRIPS

above 306 feet. Altenhoff and Ellyson both shrug. Manual height estimations are often wrong. All that damn trig. Besides, they agree, what makes a tree great to climb is not height but gnarliness. Literally. Battered by wind and splintered by lightning, ancient trees sprout dozens of reiterations—new trunks, essentially—and wind up looking like behemoth stalks of broccoli. The growth can get so thick that organic goodies collect and decay, forming soil where bushes grow and lizards scamper, an earth above earth, a McDonald's Playland in the sky.

"At the tops of these trees, there are places you'll never see from the ground," Ellyson says.

Equal parts sport, science, and environmental crusade, tall-tree climbing bears little resemblance to backyard kid stuff. The ascending methods were developed by arborists and canopy researchers, people who can and will bend your ear for hours about the biomechanics of arboreal water transport. But as a high-wire act that takes you into vertical wilderness few people will ever see, it's ripe for adventure, too. Athletically, caving and rock climbing are the big influences. Culturally, it's Tolkien, Python, MacGyver.



● Out on a limb, literally, to rig up a hammock.

Altenhoff's path to human squirreldom was typical. His CV would seem to chart a dog's breakfast of jobs, but then you realize they're all centered on the exact same thing: scaling trees. He's climbed to harvest cones, catelog species, and measure heights, to develop gear, count voles, and rescue cougars. He lives for trees and can do everything in them—eat, sleep, read and write, play a Tibetan drum, wield a thirty-six-inch chain saw, and make love to his wife, all with élan.

TO COMPLEMENT our first climb in dense, murky woods, we head the next day to an open, windswept stretch of coast north of Lincoln City. After hiking five miles in the Siuslaw National Forest, we reach a grassy headland that dives to the Pacific. Sea stacks jut from the froth, and eagles circle overhead. Somebody should get married here. Somebody *did* get married here—Scott and Susan Altenhoff—and ever since, he's lusted for a particular tree, a Sitka spruce sprouting at the brink of a cliff. The typically placid Scott is gushing uncontrollably: "Isn't this incredible? Isn't this *incredible*?" To share in his rapture, Altenhoff has invited a friend to join us—the deliciously named Viola Brumbaugh, who works for New Tribe, a manufacturer of tree-climbing gear.

Getting here is not half the fun; it is terrifying. To reach the spruce, we negotiate a hillside threaded with ankle-grabbing vines. Then the bushes end, leaving a few sketchy feet of dirt to the precipice. I chip on to a safety line, but it provides scant comfort. The tree arcs 70 degrees out over the sea, the connection between trunk and cliff is barely wide enough for two feet. From my big toe, it's a 160-foot plumb-line drop to waves that bust up against sharp rocks. Piggy and the conch bit it in a place just like this.

Focus. Staple guns to climbing line, check. Feet to loops, check. All straps connected to harness, harness cinched to flesh-gouging tightness, check, check, and triple check. Climb on. I use the staple guns—*zip, zip*—but also put feet to bark and hands to branches. They're nicely spaced, forming a ladder up the trunk. Sixty feet up, I stop and clip my monkey tail—a long seat-belt-like strap—around a branch and detach from the main climbing line. This ensures relative safety. I'll fall no more than eight feet and scream no lower than triple high C.

The view is staggering. Maxfield Parrish–unreal. We're over a deep, V-sheped cove filled with water of almost tropical turquoisity. A waterfall spills down at the deep end. Far below on a beach, seals are scattered like cocktail wieners. Brumbaugh, long-haired, nimble, darts about the canopy—here above, there beside, seconds later below. Altenhoff rigs a line and reppels, commando style, down to just above the rocky surf. My exploration is a little more restrained—inching out on creaking limbs, resting in convenient crooks, and climbing upward as if on a shag-carpeted spiral staircase.

That night, after dinner on solid ground, Scott and I return. I can only hear, not see, the waves hara-kiring on the rocks below, and this is a good thing. Because here's where a nutty trip gets nuttiest. Altenhoff has rigged two deep-dish hammocks. I climb into the tree and reach the limb where mine dangles. Slightly cold and seriously tired, two hundred feet above salt and spray and kelp and whales, I *really* don't want to fall. So I scootch feetfirst, hands on bark, butt making it to canvas, sleeping bag gradually worked up around my corpus. There's a harness around my waist. Safety straps protrude from bag to line. The wind blows, the hammock sways, the surf hisses, and, weirdly enough, I'm comfortable. ■

> Three More Places to Go Climb a Tree

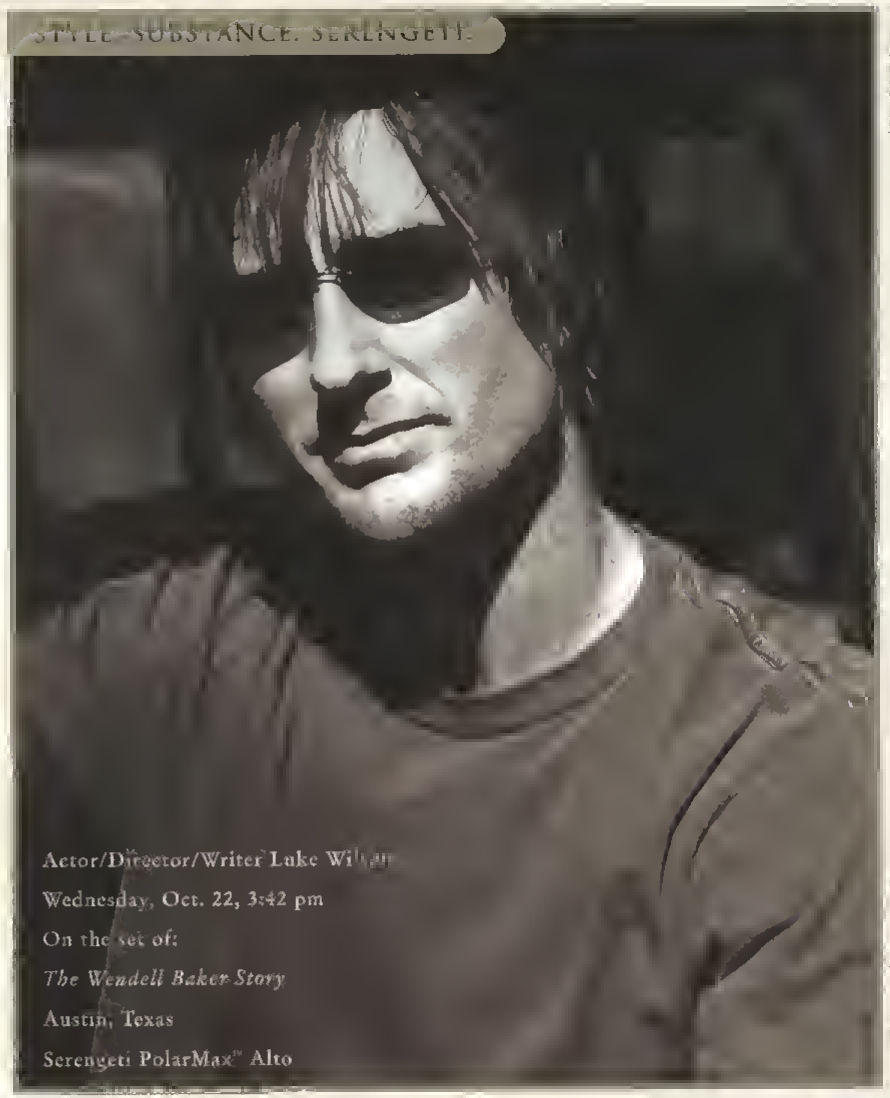


***ATLANTA.** Meet Diana and Nimrod, broad white oaks on a sliver of land called Founder's Grove that amounts to the Harvard of arboreal ascension. The first tree-climbing school in the U.S. has trained thousands of canopy warriors here. Tree Climbers International: 404-377-3150. $400 for two days. ***EVERGREEN, COLORADO.** Atop ninety-foot orange ponderosa pines, check out elk grazing in grasslands that ramp up to Front Range peaks. Hang on for tree-surfing: ponderosas are known for swaying wildly. Tree Climbing Colorado: 303-526-2904. $400 for two days. ***TRAVERSE CITY, MICHIGAN.** Think tree party or spiderweb. In a daylong course, a dozen climbers learn double-rope technique to travel throughout a fifty-foot-tall, seventy-foot-wide walnut that rises from a woodsy knob overlooking a lake. Northwestern Michigan College: 231-995-1700. $50. —J. V.

PHOTOGRAPH: MARK GAMBA. ILLUSTRATION: ZOHAR LAZAR

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Getting Better

[Sports-Drink Smackdown]

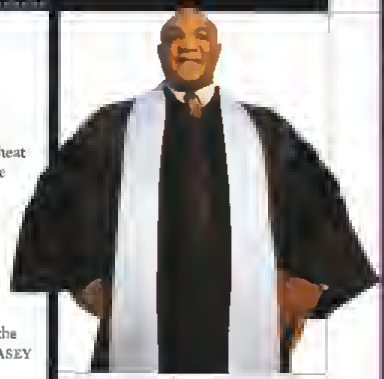


FULL DISCLOSURE: I recently walked two miles in 105 degree heat to buy a four-pack of Red Bull Sugarfree. Though some people argue that taking away the sugar is akin to taking away the kick, the opposite is true. A rush of sugar to the bloodstream impairs athletic ability by mucking with a process called gluconeogenesis, during which the body converts stored energy into fuel. Sugar also messes with your concentration, which isn't a great thing when you're trying to react quickly to, say, a fastball whizzing by your head. So it's welcome news that the makers of energy drinks have removed it. Here's how four of the new sugar-free sports beverages go down. —SUSAN CASEY

	RED BULL SUGARFREE	SUGAR-FREE YJ STINGER ("Enraged Raspberry" flavor)	EXTREME ENERGY TECH ("Extreme Cola Rush" flavor)	DIET ROCKSTAR
				
WHAT'S IN IT	The caffeine of about one cup of coffee, plus a passel of B vitamins and 1,000 milligrams of taurine, an amino acid that moderates blood sugar. Taurine is worth taking. It smooths out jangly caffeine highs and generally makes your body happy.	Similar to Red Bull, but also adds guarana, yerba maté, and ginseng—all stimulants—on top of the caffeine.	The kitchen sink. A powerful multivitamin in a can, plus a rocket launcher's worth of stimulants. Also includes carnitine, a nutrient that supposedly helps metabolize fat, and glutamine, a muscle-building amino acid.	Ambitious blend that includes caffeine, taurine, B vitamins (though fewer than Red Bull), vitamin C, guarana, ginkgo biloba (alleged to help memory and focus), and milk thistle (a liver detoxifier).
GET-OFF-YOUR-ASS FACTOR	8.5 (out of 10)	9, but with jitters.	7	6
TASTES LIKE	Vanilla and citrus. Not too sweet.	Candy. A tad too sweet, though better on ice.	Seats me, but it ain't cola.	Cough syrup mixed with vitamins. Almost undrinkable.
BOTTOM LINE	I'm in love.	My second favorite.	Great stuff if you can stomach it.	Real rock stars would hurl it out a hotel-room window.

Susan Casey is an overworked executive and former internationally ranked athlete who continues to compete against college-age punks.

A 30-SECOND SERMON BY GEORGE FOREMAN



On Sayin' Grace

MY KIDS DON'T KNOW anything about not havin'. They don't know what it's like to open a refrigerator and see nothin' inside. And I don't want to teach them a lesson by not putting anything in the refrigerator. So I'll look at the food laid out on the table, and I'll tell 'em this story.

When I was a kid, I used to play all day with these two boys. In the afternoon, their mother would tell me, "Go home and have some lunch." But there was no lunch to be had at my house. Sometimes, on school days, I would take a brown paper bag and blow it up just to make people think it was full. So instead of going home, I'd stay outside this family's house and peek in through the window as they ate. I can still see their table. They'd have these chicken drumsticks with the skin peeled back so you could see the meat on top. The mother would be cutting sandwich bread for her kids and taking the edges off—not even using the crust! And I'd be thinking, Boy, if I could just have some of those bones with that leftover chicken skin and a little crust to wrap around it. . . . Then someone at the table would look toward the window, and I'd duck down.

Now I tell my kids, "Let's thank God for our food." I never eat without saying a prayer.

George Foreman, two-time heavyweight champ and portable-grill entrepreneur, is pastor of the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ in Houston.

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The November Fifteen

You never recover from the kind of torture we endured

BY NICHOLAS MONTEMARANO

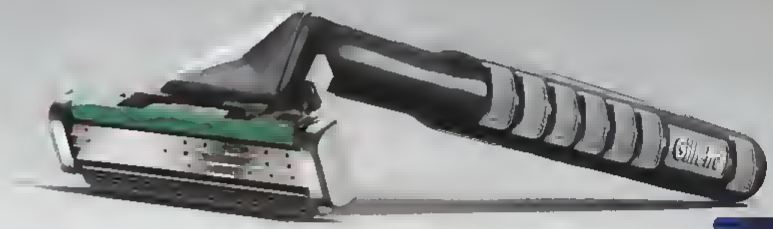
THEY TOOK FIFTEEN OF US AWAY, but fewer than half came back.

They rounded us up one night in our homes and drove us blindfolded in several vans for an hour or more to what looked—when they removed the blindfolds—like an abandoned factory. I cannot speak for the other men, but I did not know why they had come for me. In any case, once we were in the factory and the doors were locked and they began interrogating us, why they had come for us and what we knew and didn't know no longer mattered. One's life outside—as terrifying as it was the first few days imagining never returning to it—eventually fell away into a kind of dream or myth. The only reality we knew—the only one that mattered—was what was happening to us and to our bodies inside the mostly empty and therefore echoing rooms of the factory.

When they were not interrogating us, they kept us—sometimes blindfolded, more often not—in the main room of the factory, which looked something like an airplane hangar, though much larger. From there, we could hear the pleading and screams of whomever they were questioning in one of the many side rooms. Our hands were almost always tied together behind our backs, and we were made to spend most of the day, and sometimes the night, on our knees, side by side, and were not permitted to look at one another or speak or try to communicate in any way. We were not told these rules; we learned of them by witnessing what happened to someone who broke one of these rules he didn't even know about in the first place. The first one of us who looked to his side was hit across his kneecaps with a lead pipe. The first who turned to look at the man who had been struck was himself struck. The first of us to speak—he said something innocent to me like "Nice accommodations they have here," something not intended as the beginning of some insurrection but rather as an attempt, as I saw it, at humor in the face of grim and certainly absurd circumstances—this man's knees were broken in front of us, and he was left there crying, much like my then-ten-year-old daughter cried when she burned her hand on an iron. If you have ever banged your knee on the bottom of your desk and know what that pain feels like and how it can bring you to tears and send you into a tantrum of swearing, you still have no idea—I didn't then but soon would—what it feels like to have your knees broken. You are a baby; you

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keep crying for your mommy and you don't care who hears you. You curse the person who gave you such pain, and besides, you know—or think you know—that that person can't possibly give you more pain than the pain you already have, and you further reason that perhaps if you curse him and his family enough, he might put a gun to your head and pull the trigger and put you out of your misery. But the man who gave you this pain does nothing, does not even respond to your curses with another whack with the pipe; he just sits where he has been trained to sit and does not even look at you but rather at the wall behind you. He has been trained not to know your face—the color and shape of your eyes, the hook of your nose, the acne scars near your temple—because to know your face might be to remember that you are human. Even as you vomit and scream and bang your head on the cement floor with the hope that the pain you create in your head will at least momentarily distract you from the pain in your knees, he lights another cigarette, picks his nose, farts. That he cares nothing for your suffering is why he is good at what he does and why you have every reason to fear what he is capable of doing to you. The same was true of the others. They were machines. You were not human, the skin they burned not human skin, the bones they broke not human bones but rather twigs they were being paid to snap so that those twigs could more easily be disposed of.

I would be less than honest, though, if I did not say that despite my hatred of them, there was something in the Zenlike way they operated that I admired. They were so focused, they seemed swept clean of everything but what they were doing. There wasn't a single sign of weakness in any of them. We looked for, but didn't see, one look that betrayed even a bit of feeling. They never flinched upon striking or turned away upon seeing blood, they never pulled back a punch or kick, they never offered or even threw at us a handkerchief. The tone of their voices never changed, they did not scream and certainly were never soft-spoken but were rather always neutral and cold. This was business. We were objects to be manipulated, nothing more; our bodies were to be made to feel pain until that pain was enough to make us tell them what they wanted to know. I did not know what they wanted to know, but I told them everything. It did not matter what I told them as long as I told them something. I said yes when I thought yes was what I was supposed to say, no when I thought they wanted no. When they asked me if I knew the whereabouts of a man named Greg November, I told them I had no idea who he was. After they beat me to the point of being almost unconscious—volleys of punches and kicks to every part of my body—they asked me again if I knew the whereabouts of this Greg November, but I was too delirious to even make something up, so they beat me again, this time into unconsciousness, and when I woke, they asked me, as matter-of-factly as one would ask the time, "Where is Greg November?"

It is unlikely that you have ever been beaten to the extent that I was beaten, but perhaps, in the course of this telling, you have imagined yourself subjected to some of the tortures I have only begun to describe, perhaps you have imagined yourself, though in terrible pain, brave; perhaps you have imagined spitting in your captors' faces (as a few of us, all of whom did not make it home, did). But what you should imagine, if you want to be somewhat realistic, is you blubbering, you pleading, you kissing the shoes of the men causing your pain, all of which I am not ashamed to say I did. I told them I had a wife and a daughter whom I loved and whom I wanted to see again, though by this point neither my daughter nor my wife nor my ever seeing them again concerned me. What concerned me was only that my body would feel no more pain, and I swore to God and on the souls of my dead parents and on the lives of my wife and daughter that I had no idea who Greg November was and that I would even join them and do whatever I could to help them find him, would even beat and torture the other men if necessary. After the delirium of a series of beatings, when I was left with bruises so sensitive that even my clothing against them was enough to make me willing to sell my soul and the souls of my family for just one minute of relief, I was filled with a rage unlike any rage I had known before or have known since—not for the men beating me, but for Greg November.

I have spent much time in the three years since my release making lists. The worst physical tortures. The worst psychological tortures. What's worse—hunger or thirst? What's more terrifying—suffocation with a plastic bag, or having one's head held underwater until one blacks out five or ten or more times in a row, or the moment just before one's genitals are burned? The possibilities are endless, one can consider such questions with oneself or with others indefinitely and never become tired of the debate. There is no telling how many times I have revised my lists. I might wake during the night in a sweat and remember some torture I had forgotten and will add it to my list, or I might remember just how terrible a torture low on my list was and will move it up. I play games with the lists. Sometimes I will not look at a list for several months and will then try to rewrite it from memory, just to see if I come up with the same order. Other times I give a list out of order to someone I know, or more often to a stranger, and ask him to order it based on his assumptions and speculations about pain.

> If you have ever banged your knee on your desk and know what that pain feels like, you still have no idea what it feels like to have your knees broken.

They were pros: They had what they did to us down to a science.

They had no intention of obtaining information from the three men they sacrificed but rather used them to better their chances of obtaining information from the rest of us. The first two were the man whose kneecaps they broke and the man who turned to look at him. These men were given no warning, nor were they asked any questions. They were given pain to give the rest of us something to think about; they lay on the floor in front of us, crying and cursing, for almost a week, and they were brought no food and only enough water to be kept alive. The third man sacrificed was the only one brave—some might say foolish—enough to try to give food to the first two men. He was taken away to one of the side rooms, where, for three days, at varying intervals, we heard him screaming. I used to consider the worst part of those three days the time between screams (the only sound was of water dripping from

GRAB LIFE BY THE HORNS
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BUCKLE UP

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a pipe somewhere behind us), the waiting would rattle my nerves to the point where my hands began to shake. (They still do, though now I am proud to show them shaking and to tell people why they shake and to know that I know things these people afraid to look at me will never know.) Upon hearing the next scream—sometimes six or eight hours would pass between screams—I would jump (some of the men sitting next to me would cry out) and for a few minutes shake violently—my hands, my head—and eventually settle back to what, by that time, had become my usual amount of shaking. Only later was I able to see that waiting for this man's next scream was not half as terrible as waiting for his next scream and knowing it would never come. What you should understand, or pretend to, is that our waiting for his scream continues today. I do not intend this, or any part of what I am writing, to sound melodramatic, nor is it my intention—as I believe it was the intention of the TV stations that covered our return to the factory—to elicit in you, who do not know me, some kind of neatly packaged pseudogrief, but rather it is my intention to help you see that you, too, are not alive, and if you see this, if you know it, *then* you will grieve.

I was one of the last interrogated and so was able to hear in the sounds the others made just what they had in store for me. Some of their screams sounded so fake, like the screams early film heroines made, that thinking about them now almost makes me break out in laughter. Some men came back to the main room shaking, some were crying, some had to be dragged back, no one was carried. Some did not come back; some came back, but when they fell and did not move, not even when poked or slapped, they were dragged away and never seen again.

I do not know why I lived and some of the others did not. Most of the time I attribute it to luck, which isn't the right word but the only word I can think of close to what I mean. I don't necessarily mean *good* luck, just luck. I will say about myself without shame that I have a low threshold for discomfort and without pride that I have a very high threshold for pain. I did not cry when they drove a nail into my heel, but I cried when I was not allowed to wipe my running nose; I did not cry when they burned my back, nor when they gathered around to beat and kick me, but their not letting me sleep broke me. After this, everything made me cry equally: their dunking my head underwater dozens of times and their making me sit in my own shit and their breaking my knee. (For a long time, knee breaking was number one on my Most Physically Painful list, until recently, when I moved sleep deprivation to number one, where it remains as of this writing.) If you are not allowed to sleep for long periods of time—part of me hopes you will never know what this feels like, and another part of me *wants* you to know—you can think of nothing else. You will do or say anything to be able to sleep; you will give up your children just to be able to close your eyes for a few minutes. They kept me awake for five days. If I closed my eyes, they beat me. After a while, I wanted them to beat me unconscious, but they knew to beat me only so much, or sometimes they burned my back or my genitals or broke one of my fingers. Life became a choice between pains: I could either experience the pain of not sleeping, or I could experience the pain of not sleeping *with* the pain from burns and broken bones. So I tried to stop closing my eyes. The last two days I spent on the floor; they kept propping me up against a wall. They threw cold water on me, they boxed my ears, they made loud noises. I hated them, and then I was too weak to hate them. And then I loved them. What made me love them was that they were the only ones who could take away my pain, and when they did, when they allowed me to close my eyes, they became gods.

> Since we had been taken from our homes in November, they called us the November Fifteen. A company in New Jersey trademarked the phrase.

When I woke, I was both penitent and grateful, I stopped saying I was sorry only to say thank you for their having given me sleep, which I saw not as a right but as a gift. I trusted and loved them and would have done anything for them. It did not matter that they were the same people who had beaten me and burned me and kept me awake.

I had been awake for no more than five minutes before they asked me again, "Where is Greg November?"

I said, "For God's sake, I don't know."

They looked down at me on the floor; they gathered around me.

"What is your name?"

"I don't know."

"Where are you?"

"I don't know."

"Where do you live?"

"I don't remember."

"Do you know the whereabouts of Greg November?"

"No."

"Do you know anyone who might lead us to Greg November?"

"No, I swear, I don't know who he is."

Then with a pipe they broke my kneecap.

Why they released those of us who survived, I'm not sure. My theory is that they knew we would say nothing. Some *did* go to the police, though, some spoke of Greg November. I did not go to the police; the police came for me. But before I get to what the police did, let me first say that upon my arrival home (I was left, kneecap and nose broken, near the garbage pails my wife had set out curbside the night before), my wife and daughter were strangers to me. But no, that's not quite accurate. They were not strangers but rather were simply *strange*. Unrecognizable is what I mean to say. Two things, one smaller than the other, walking on legs, water running from their eyes, sounds coming from holes in their faces. They took me to a hospital, where my cuts were cleaned, my burns wrapped, my leg put in a cast. A very short doctor with dark skin, who would not look directly at me except to treat me, packed gauze into my crooked nose and strapped over my face a plastic mask, which my daughter kept asking me if she could wear. When the nurses and doctors asked what had happened to me, I told them I had gotten into a fight. I could see on my wife's face that she wanted me to tell the truth. But what had happened to me was suddenly something I wanted to keep to myself, not out of shame but rather out of possessiveness. It was mine and I did not want these people who could never know what I was talking about to try to make my pain their pain. But this turned out to be wishful thinking. Even before I had come back, they had taken it from me. The wives and neighbors and friends and coworkers and aunts and uncles and second cousins

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twice removed of those of us who had been taken from our homes—anyone who could claim grief—had sounded the alarm. The police had been involved since the day after we were abducted; there was an ongoing investigation. In the relatively short time we had been gone—perhaps it was two weeks, though my sense of time while I was in the factory was suspect—there had been daily prayer vigils and candle lightings at the churches those of us who attended church belonged to, a special assembly at my daughter's school, and three bake sales to help pay for a private investigator. Someone made posters with tiny pictures of our faces lined up in neat rows, and dozens of people went out after they got home from work and taped the posters to trees and telephone poles and in subway stations and to the sides of bus-stop shells. Search parties made up of friends and neighbors and even strangers searched the city and up to a hundred-mile radius beyond the city every night. Everyone, my wife told me, wanted to be involved. The outpouring of support was, in her words, inspiring and a sign that despite the suffering I had endured, there was goodness in the world. Even more wonderful, it was pointed out to me, was that these people—many of them complete strangers who had volunteered in some capacity to help find me—took it upon themselves to visit me at home, where my nose and knee were healing, to tell me how happy they were that I was alive and safe and to wish me a speedy recovery and to tell me in great detail everything they had done for me while I was missing, to which I suppose I was expected to say—but could not say—thank you.

A young man running for city council paid for a parade to celebrate our safe return home. High school marching bands played music, and there was a float in the shape of a ship, and lip-synching on the deck was an old man I was told was a crooner semi-famous in Brooklyn in the 1950s who now performed mostly at Italian weddings, and people tried to climb onto the float to touch him or to get his autograph. When the parade reached its destination, a men-and-boys choir from Queens sang "Amazing Grace" and "Ave Maria," the latter of which made some people cry, and then the man running for city council gave a speech about our bravery and how what he was seeing that day—the outpouring of emotion and support from the "good people of New York City"—made him proud to be running for city council, and he hoped they would give him their vote so he could have an opportunity to "serve such fine people in the greatest city in the history of God's great earth." Cameras flashed as he shook our hands. I saw a reporter asking my wife questions; someone asked my daughter to be on a talk show about the children of survivors of torture. A man gave me his card and said a calendar was in the works and not to worry, if I wanted to keep my shirt on, I could keep my shirt on, and 10 percent of the proceeds would go directly into an international fund to help victims of torture.

Someone was wearing a T-shirt with my face on the front and HOME WHERE YOU BELONG. WE MISSED YOU on the back. They needed something to call us, some catchphrase that, when spoken, could evoke any number of emotions. Since we had been taken from our homes in November, they called us—including those who did not make it home—the November Fifteen. A company in New Jersey trademarked the phrase and its numerical shorthand, 11-15. Baseball hats were made, which months later a local minor league team, the Brooklyn Cyclones, wore on opening day. The national anthem was sung by the daughter of one of the men who were killed, and after she was finished, it was announced that she had recently won a scholarship to a school for the performing arts and "let's give her an extra round of applause" and "we're sure her father is looking down upon her right now smiling." Whenever I saw or heard the words "November Fifteen" or "Eleven Fifteen" or even the numbers—not just on hats or T-shirts but even on the clock on the table beside my bed—I was overcome, first with a deep hatred for Greg November, then with what I can describe only as a sickness beginning in my stomach, then making its way into my lungs, then into my head, and eventually I would be felled by an exhaustion that kept me in bed sometimes for days.

Because my hands shook so much, I could not return to my job (I designed furniture for a company that specialized in "making the new look antique"), so they moved me to the main office and gave me a new title and a private bathroom. Men would knock on my door and ask me how I was getting along and tell me I was doing a great job, even though I had done nothing, and they would bring me to meetings, during which people would





Tantalizing BILL BLASS



Photo by Michael Grimm

78° in the pool,
360° views of Manhattan

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come up with ideas about how to make the company more money ("it doesn't have to *be* antique to *look* antique"), and after which—though I had said nothing—people would talk about these ideas as if they had been mine and would pat my back and say, "Nice work. Glad to have you on board," and so on. I sat in this office the better part of a year and revised my lists. And then one day, I did not go to work. I sat in the park across the street from where I worked and ate a corn muffin, as I did each morning, but when an older man sat next to me to feed the birds (he put bread crumbs and seeds in the brim of his hat and the birds sat on his shoulders and ate), I was overcome, at the same time, with a terrible sadness and a joy so unlike anything I had ever felt that I feared I could not hold it inside me. I was very happy for this man, for what I took to be the life he had set up for himself in this park, his feeding the birds and their coming to him—yes, part of it was the way they came to him. But it was also that this man seemed not to care about his importance to these birds. He sat there and closed his eyes, and he was no more than a statue. But no, to them he was *not* a statue, and this was what made me sad—that I had become, to others, a statue, a memorial.

> But do you see how I still suffer for Greg November? Do you see how easily the story of *my* death becomes the story of *his*?

Even after I stopped going to work, I continued to receive a monthly paycheck, and every so often someone I did not know but who seemed to know me would come to my home, dress me in a suit, and take me to some company function or other at which company bigwigs would give speeches during which I was made to stand and everyone would look at me and applaud, and then they, too, would stand, and everyone would raise their glasses to me, but by this point, I would lose my hearing. I would see their mouths moving and their hands clapping but could hear no sounds.

I became quiet. Reclusive, some people said. I spoke very little to the people I knew, including my wife and daughter, and tried to avoid those people who—because they had heard about me on the news—believed they knew me. I felt most comfortable around people who, because they must not have watched TV or listened to the radio or read newspapers or magazines, had heard nothing about the November Fifteen. (Even now it pains me to write this phrase.)

It was around this time, too, that laughter began to kill me. My daughter, then almost twelve, would be watching one of her favorite TV shows—a show, from what I could tell, about a group of girls in boarding school going through all sorts of dramas, most of which involved boys—and every half minute or so, I would hear something that sounded like what someone coughing inside your head might sound like. I would look up from my lists and see my daughter sitting on the floor, very close to the TV, and her smile seemed frozen on her face. She never asked me what I was writing. I never showed her. Sometimes—I am almost too ashamed to admit this—I left my lists where I thought she would find them, I wanted *her* to know what I knew. I looked for my daughter's finger smudges—sweat or the chocolate syrup she liked to put on the ice cream she liked to eat every day after school—but the lists never seemed to have been touched. I began to have the feeling that I was slipping away from things, that the distance between me and my daughter and my wife—between me and everything, really—was becoming too great to return from. I did not know where I was slipping away to, but it felt as though I was slipping away to death, or something close to death. Once, I tried to engage my daughter in a discussion about her favorite TV show, even though just thinking about this show caused me great anxiety. I asked her which was her favorite character (*I guess this season I like Joste*) and why (*She's just so cool, plus she has the best hair*) and what was happening to Josie lately (*Her boyfriend broke up with her even though he loves her*) and what did she think of the laugh track? (*The what?*) What did she think of the fact that no one was really laughing at the show? It was just a recording of people laughing at something else. (*So what.*) Didn't it bother her at all that the laughter was fake? (*No, why should I care, and besides, there's another show about the first girls in what used to be an all-boys high school, and the show is pretty funny, but they don't use the laugh thing, and the show's not as funny.*)

"I'm sorry," I said, and she said, "What for?" and I said, "I don't know. I guess I haven't been feeling so well lately and maybe I shouldn't be—"

"Okay," she said, "show's back on."

My daughter was watching this show when the police came to get me, and though she showed some concern, she could not help glancing at the TV as they questioned me.

They wanted to know what I knew about Greg November. They told me it was in my best interest to cooperate. "Tell them what they want to know," my wife said. No one seemed to hear or understand me when I said, "I don't know anything," which was the answer I gave to most questions they asked.

"We're going to have to bring you in," they told me.

"What for?"

"We need to ask you some questions."

"But you just asked me questions."

"Please come with us, sir."

"Are you arresting me?"

"If you would just come with us."

"Where are you taking me?"

"We'll have you back as soon as you answer our questions."

"I told you, I don't know anything."

"Maybe you should go with them," my wife said. "The information you have might save someone else's life."

"Yes," I said, "and then we can have a parade in my honor."

"Honey," my wife said.

My daughter said, "I don't want you to be arrested. What if my friends see you with handcuffs around your wrists?"

"Please, sir," one of the officers said, and so I went with them.

They took me to the police station and then to a desk where one man sat with me and asked me questions—where and when I was born, the names of my parents, where I was employed, was I married, did I have any children—and then to a room way in the back of the station with a cage in the corner and bars over the windows and a mirror I knew was really a window through which they could watch me.

A man came into the room and sat across from me and smoked a cigarette and kept fingering his gray mustache and said nothing, and then he left.

A few hours later, a different man—this



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one younger and with his hair combed back and wet as if he had just taken a shower—came into the room and sat across from me and looked at me until I looked away. I was given neither food nor water, nor was I asked if I wanted anything or if I needed to use the bathroom.

Late that night—it had been dark outside for quite some time—the two men came back and stood behind me. The older man asked me if I thought I was special.

"Excuse me?"

"Do you think you're some kind of hero?"

"No," I said.

"Do you think you can refuse to cooperate with us just because someone gave you a parade?"

"I'm not sure what you want from me."

"Tell us what you know about Greg November."

"I don't know anything about him."

"Why are you protecting him?" the younger man said. "What does he have on you?"

"I'd like to sleep," I said.

"Tell us what you know," the older man said.

I put my arms on the table in front of me and laid my head on my arms. The younger man pulled up my head. I put my head on my arms again. The older man turned over the table and kicked it to the corner of the room. I lay on my back on the floor and closed my eyes. They pulled me to my feet and walked me to the window. They handcuffed my wrists behind my back and then handcuffed the handcuffs to the bars over the window so that it was impossible for me to lie on the floor or even squat. The pain was so excruciating, I was sure my arms would break.

They left the room and did not come back for what must have been two hours. I know they were watching me from the other side of the mirror.

When they walked into the room, the older man stood very close to me and said, "Tell us what you know about Greg November."

"He's a man who everyone wants to find for some reason."

They left me and did not come back until morning. During the hours I was alone, I was not sure which pain was worse—the pain of my arms handcuffed and raised behind me or the pain of having to relieve myself. When one pain became too much, I would try to concentrate on the other, and for the better part of four hours, I moved my focus back and forth, and had I had just one hand free, I would have created some third pain to help take my mind off the other two. By the time they came back into the room, there was only the pain in my arms. My pants were wet, and there was a puddle at my feet. I could feel the beginning of a rash between my legs.

The older man said, "Tell us what you know about Greg November."

"He's a butcher in Bay Ridge," I said.

After a few minutes passed, I said, "I'm sorry. I was lying. He's not a butcher. He works for the sanitation department. He lives with his sister in Kew Gardens. He goes by the name of Jon Richmond."

Later I said, "Okay, do you want the truth? Here's the truth. He doesn't live in Kew Gardens. He lives alone in the country and doesn't have a phone. He plays tennis and meditates twice a day."

Even when they had left me alone again, I kept talking. I said, "He has three children, ages ten, seven, and two. He lost the pinkie finger on his left hand in a fishing accident when he was fifteen. He has agoraphobia and holds his fork with his left hand."

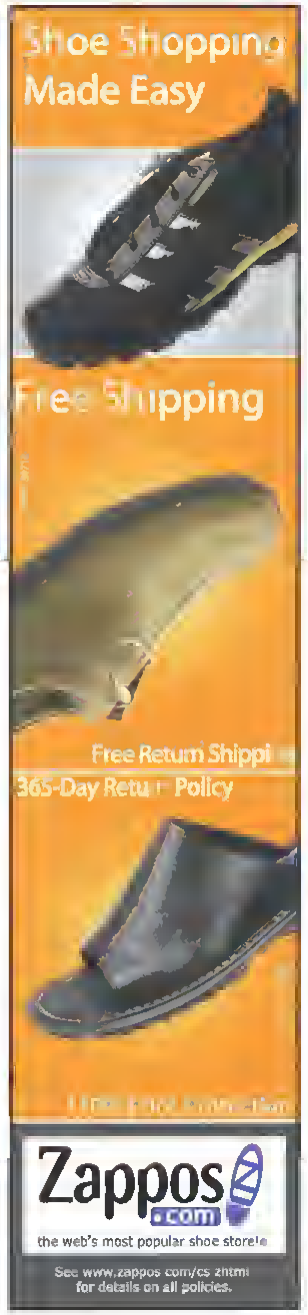
When the officers released me, and when I walked through the streets and into the subway station, I had to fight the urge to stop someone—a stranger, anyone—and ask for help, or even just to ask what day it was, what year, where I was, and could they see me, was I alive, would they look into my wallet (I was afraid to) and tell me my name.

I became more reclusive. Everything frightened me: bugs, cats, anything alive, my wife, my daughter, anything that spoke, anything that grew, my own fingernails, my daughter's hair, the sound and movement of clocks, the sound of leaves blowing through streets, the pressure of my feet against the floor, of my body against my bed.

It was around this time, too, that my dreams about Greg November changed.

For the first year after I had been tortured, I had recurring dreams of finding him and doing to him exactly what had been done to me, but I was much too frightened even to search for him. I always felt that I was being watched by the men who had taken me away, that if I made inquiries about Greg November or looked in the phone book for his name, they would find out and would assume I had known something about him and would come to take me away again. But now, in my dreams, upon finding him, rather than beating him and dragging him through the streets, I began weeping and embraced him as one would embrace a friend not seen for many years. (I dreamed that he was tall and thin and handsome and had a beard and looked like Jesus Christ.) We would hold each other for a long time, and in some of these dreams, I would take his face in my hands and kiss his lips fiercely, and it was not like a kiss at all but more like an attempt to press my closed mouth into and through his.

I no longer care to know what Greg November did to make so many people want to find him. It has been written about in the papers and is still being talked about on the news and on TV and radio talk shows. Greg November was found six months ago hanging from a ceiling fan in a small house in a Spanish village of less than a hundred people, where for ten years he had been pretending to be—and I suppose, after that long, was—a sculptor named Dan Havel. The initial conclusion was that his death—Havel's—was a suicide, but several people in the village, when questioned, said there was something strange about Havel. He seemed not to trust anyone; he went out only to buy food or art supplies and never allowed anyone inside his home; no one had seen his sculptures, each of which he was rumored to have destroyed upon completion. (In his home at the time of his death were dozens of unfinished works, some made from his own fingernail trimmings, others made from his hair, which he cut himself.) Even during the village's annual Spring Festival, to which everyone in the village brings food or wine, and during which, for three consecutive days, there is music and dancing and even some praying, and which is the event most people in the village spend all year looking forward to, to raise their spirits, they say, during long days of work or when life's misfortunes find them—even during this festival, Havel, as they knew him, refused to participate. Some of the villagers—after noticing that Havel had not been to the festival his first two years living among them—went to his home and offered to accompany him, but Havel said he was not feeling up to it, which was what he said the next year and the next, and eventually people no longer asked him to attend. In general, he became someone not to be bothered with, which went against the all-inclusiveness the village prided itself on. What the villagers told the police supported the initial report of Havel's death having been a suicide. He was a depressed eccentric—such seemed to be the logical conclusion. But there must have been something in what the villagers said that aroused suspicion or at least intrigue, or perhaps it was that the police found no identification on his person or in his home and could not locate any relatives or anyone who knew a Dan Havel who fit his description. A full autopsy was ordered, upon which there were discovered bruises on Havel's head, behind his ear, and on his hand. The possibility arose that Havel's death could have been a murder rather than a suicide. Someone could have knocked him unconscious and put the rope around his neck and hung him from the ceiling fan. Everyone in the village was questioned, especially those who had been most put off by Havel's isolation, but no one could provide any information about Havel other than that he was, in their opinion, odd, and no one was named an official suspect. Perhaps most crucial to tracing Dan Havel back to Greg November, however, was a bookmark found inside one of the few books he owned. Written on the bookmark was 312 EAST TENTH STREET, $400/MONTH, 1 ROOM, K STEINER, 233-5141, 12/19/88. It turned out that Karen Steiner, whom the police were able to reach at the num- [continued on page 226]



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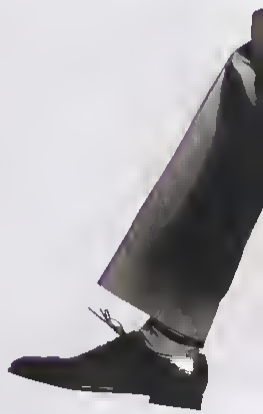
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Esquire

IN OUR CONTINUING QUEST TO LEARN FROM THE FINEST, Esquire has combed the earth in search of the best dressed man. We scanned every square mile of the globe, from the tip of Africa to the beaches of Mexico. What we found was a group of men who take getting dressed in the morning to another level, their individuality made manifest in everything from a luxurious bespoke suit to a basic pair of jeans. We can learn something about style from each of them, especially **the one man who landed at the top of our list . . .**

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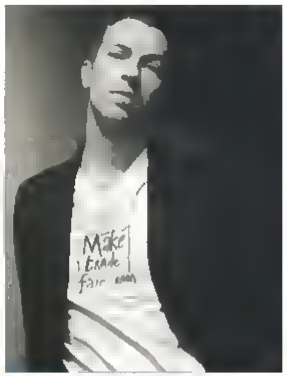
Where you'll see him next: In *Be Cool*, the sequel to *Get Shorty* and in an OutKast HBO movie, both set to be released next year
His look: Soulfully preppy
What you can borrow: Andre is the modern dandy par excellence totally at home with clothes as an expression of himself. Even if you never dress remotely like him, you could do worse than follow his example of reining in often flamboyant color and old-school preppy by pairing them with classic tailoring. His key is that he's always in charge. Which is precisely where you should be, even if all you're into is a three-button suit. Left: Double-breasted suede trench coat ($2,295) by Michael Kors, corduroy trousers ($215) by Burberry London. Center: Three-button wool tweed jacket ($1,495) and wool sweater ($490) by Gucci; silk scarf ($225) by Michael Kors. Right: Cashmere sweater ($895) by Ralph Lauren Purple Label; cotton shirt ($130) by Thomas Pink; corduroy trousers by Andre Benjamin; leather wing tips (made to order) by John Lobb

"I used to watch the old men in my neighborhood, the way they carried themselves. And then there are period movies like *Legends of the Fall* and *The Great Gatsby*—the clothes are so amazing, so perfect and comfortable. They're kind of like a uniform, which I've always been into. To me, that's real style, anything that feels comfortable and expresses your personality and makes you stand a little taller."

Photographs by **NORMAN JEAN ROY**

The Effortless

Mixing luxury and casual pieces with such confidence that they appear not to care, even though they do



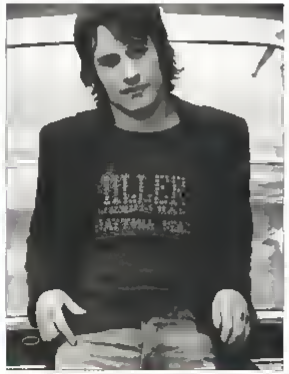
Best dressed man onstage: Chris Martin, lead singer of Coldplay, England
His look: Fresh outta the suitcase
What you can borrow: Chris Martin is the ultimate dressed-down rock star and a perfect case study for how a great suit jacket can save even the most ragged of political-slogan T-shirts. A well-made jacket will keep you from looking sloppy, but it needs to be high quality, lest you look like you just borrowed your roadie's wardrobe.



Best dressed golden boy: Jude Law, actor, England
His look: Quality
What you can borrow: Law is able to pull off classic Hollywood on the red carpet or cool slacker while dodging paparazzi because he knows how to pick quality, confident that as long as it's well made, it'll look good. Of course, he could wear burlap and still make the girls swoon, but we admire that he looks comfortable in any situation.



Best dressed hit maker: Pharrell Williams, music producer, Virginia Beach, Virginia
His look: High/low
What you can borrow: Williams leads the movement to restore interest in tradition by pairing more formal suit jackets with jeans, a staple of the new high/low phenomenon. Already an icon of street wear with a penchant for Adidas and camo, Williams is a lesson in how to mix old and new into something completely your own.



Best dressed man south of the border: Gael García Bernal, actor, Mexico
His look: Youthful
What you can borrow: García Bernal dresses his age just as much as he dresses for his occupation. As an actor at the art-house end of things (see Movies, page 76), he's not into the Hollywood polish, which is to say that he prefers weathered jeans and a comfortable T-shirt, even one with a logo, to see himself through.



Best dressed guy with the fewest clothes: Hugh Grant, actor, England
His look: Minimalist
What you can borrow: Grant does more with less, preferring a classic tuxedo for formal photo ops or an easy black dress shirt and jeans. He excels at keeping it simple, often sporting just a cool Panerai watch, the only jewelry a man really needs. He's also living proof that a strategic change in hairstyle can do wonders for your entire look.

Best dressed slice of artistic cred: Javier Bardem

OSCAR-NOMINATED ACTOR, SPAIN



"I like simple things. And I don't want to try too hard. So it's about a few favorite things, like my AC/DC concert T-shirt from the eighties. And depending on my next film role, I'll investigate the style of the character intensely. I'll wear the clothes and walk around the streets in them. It's very important for me to feel like that person, and clothes help me do that."

...'ll see him next: In ... with Tom Cruise ... Foxx, currently ... and director ... Amenábar's sup... *Mar Adentro*.
...: Off-duty ...
...u can borrow: Bar... easy style is innate. It's ... without being sloppy, ... sweater soft and ... jacket tailored. It's the ... elegant, off-duty look ... Italy, France, and his ... Spain are known for ... pt it and you'll find your... luxuriously at ease. ...ee-button three-quarter ...igh cashmere coat ($4,795) ...Giorgio Armani cashmere ...leneck ($1,100) by Marc ...obs jeans ($300) by ...ni Jeans.

Photograph by **NORMAN JEAN ROY**



Best dressed leading-man-in-waiting: Paul Bettany,
ACTOR, ENGLAND

"Paul [illegible] is a fa[illegible] for me growing up. And today I look at Al Pacino as a style icon. The guy always looks amazing. No one can wear suits and glasses as well as he can. It's the little things, you know. I've always been into details like the cuff of a shirt or the lining of a jacket. I have kids now, though, so it's [illegible] less of a priority. I never wore sneakers before, but now I practically live in them."

Where you'll see him next Russell Crowe's wingman in *A Beautiful Mind* and *Master and Commander*. Bettany gets his first starring role alongside Kirsten Dunst in *Wimbledon*. In theaters this month.
His look Right for the occasion.
What you can borrow Bettany's style is indicative of where men's wear is going altogether: back to the idea of the right clothes for the right moments rather than an all-encompassing semicasual mood. Typical of the new breed of men who divide their wardrobe neatly into work and play, Bettany is as much at home in an Ozwald Boateng cocktail suit for movie premieres as he is in casual jeans and sneakers for bumming around the house. If your day involves playing dual roles, take note: Wool sweater ($255) and shirt ($395) by Jil Sander; cotton jeans ($88) by A/X Armani Exchange.

by NORMAN JEAN ROY

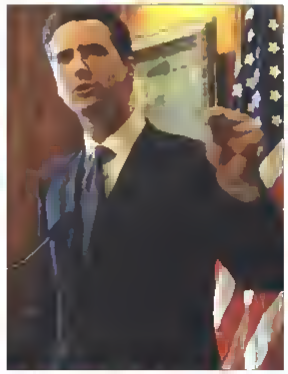
The Dignitaries
Because sometimes power is what's called for



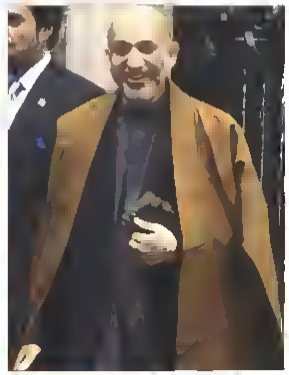
Best dressed man of peace Kofi Annan, secretary general, United Nations, New York
His look Dignified
What you can borrow How about his closetful of Brioni suits? In order to garner respect across the globe, Annan must convey dignity inside and out. His suits and ties make personality statements with interesting fabrics and patterns, yet they're subtle enough not to overshadow the gravity of his words. As a man who champions multilateralism, he's unilaterally rehabilitated the power suit.



Best dressed successor Thabo Mbeki, president, South Africa
His look Poise
What you can borrow Even with the hefty task of following Nelson Mandela and managing Africa's largest economy, Mbeki appears composed by way of shoes buffed to a shine, dark pinstripe suits, and ties that let everyone know he's someone important. Next time a fire breaks out at work, think of him.



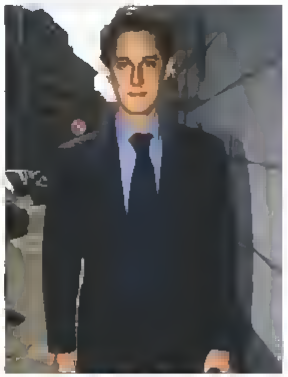
Best dressed politician Gavin Newsom, mayor, San Francisco
His look Future president
What you can borrow He claims not to give style much thought, what with same-sex marriage and homelessness currently on his mayoral agenda. But his crisp conservative look is made fresh by his youthful charisma. He's proof that the energy of the man wearing the clothes can make all the difference.



Best dressed ally Hamid Karzai, president, Afghanistan
His look Multicultural
What you can borrow Karzai mixes traditional dress from Afghanistan with the Western tradition of the suit jacket. What makes it work are the fabrics and colors he employs, which show it was all carefully considered. As a new player on the international scene, he must appeal at home and abroad. His clothes reflect that.

The Rich & Royal

Deeply traditional with hidden personal flair, these men are living proof that old school still has lessons to teach



Best dressed heir: John Elkann, automotive executive, Italy
His look: Young money, classic clothes
What you can borrow: Like his famously stylish grandfather Gianni Agnelli, Elkann has a career ahead of him as Italy's fashion peacock, wearing custom jackets with jeans and loafers and a self-assurance that belies his tender age. If you're the young-money type, give this look a try.



Best dressed royal: Prince Charles, England
His look: Regal eagle
What you can borrow: While his sons try to dress outside the royal idiom and always fail to look cool, Charles knows the value of bulletproof bespoke, much of it courtesy of Anderson & Sheppard, his Savile Row tailor. Charles knows there's flair in the royal two-piece and real style in his unimpeachable accessories.

Lifetime Achievement Award



Tom Ford, occupation unknown, New York, Los Angeles, Paris
His look: International playboy redux
What you can borrow: With his shiny shawl-collared tuxedos, Tom Ford is the twenty-first-century Hugh Hefner. He departed the Gucci Group to pursue other goals, but his biggest contribution to male style is that he made it okay to dress sexy. If you can dress for evening like Ford does, then you're the man.



Best dressed industrialist: Luca Cordero di Montezemolo, president of Ferrari, Italy
His look: Croesus without creases
What you can borrow: Montezemolo's style is the ultimate expression of the patrician-player look that many of us strive so hard to emulate because it looks so effortless. Of course, a whole lot goes into putting it together—well-chosen suits, impeccable accessories and good grooming.



Best dressed clone of Mel Gibson: Prince Felipe, Spain
His look: Easy posh
What you can borrow: Felipe's relaxed look sits well on his sloping shoulders. He doesn't live for style, but his quiet conservative look is as valid a modern modus operandi as ripped jeans and a wifebeater. If you like your style quiet but solid, take a cue from Felipe's dark tailoring and unfussy ties. It worked for James Bond.

Best dressed wake-up call: Matt Lauer,

NEWS ANCHOR, NEW YORK



"The men in my family always had a really good sense of style. My uncles knew how to wear pattern on pattern really well, and I sort of emulated them. My dad and I would also go once a year into New York City to Barneys to buy a new navy blazer, because I kept growing out of them. He always bought quality, I've always followed that. Buy quality."

Where you'll see him next: Weekday mornings on NBC's *Today* show
His look: Precise elegance
What you can borrow: A man with narrow criteria for his shirts, ties and tailoring, Lauer knows exactly what he wants. He is a living embodiment of the men's style mantra that you should put your clothes on with care and then forget all about them. An icon to professional American men, Lauer sports an Italianesque look, comfortable and polished, with the emphasis on quality of make and quiet panache rather than fashionability.
Three-button wool suit ($2,895), cotton shirt ($415) and silk tie ($175), Couture by Ermenegildo Zegna

NORMAN JEAN ROY

FOR STORE INFORMATION SEE PAGE 229



Wrestling with Bush

BY

TUCKER CARLSON | ANDREW SULLIVAN | AND TIM LaHAYE

[History will be the president's ultimate judge. In the meantime, three very different conservatives grapple with a second Bush term.]

Illustration by TIM O'BRIEN

A Conservative's Dilemma

By TUCKER CARLSON

SIX AND A HALF YEARS after I first met him, I still don't know what I think of George W. Bush. Initially, I was won over by him. In interviews, he was relaxed yet unapologetic about his political beliefs. He exuded decency. His political skills were awesome. He had an intuitive understanding of people, coupled with a Ripley's-Believe-It-or-Not ability to recall details about their lives—what schools they'd gone to, the names of their wives and parents and children, how many dogs they had. He was like Clinton—maybe better—and much less weird and needy. The first time I saw Bush work a crowd, in the spring of 1998, I became convinced he was going to be president.

It never even occurred to me that he might be dumb. For one thing, he was witty as hell, a sure marker for intelligence. For another, he had no trouble at all expressing himself. A couple of times, I did notice that tape recordings of our interviews seemed considerably less substantial than the interviews themselves had seemed at the time, as if someone had erased the content. But it didn't trouble me particularly. I put it down to the effect of Bush's personal charm.

Then I saw him give a press conference. I was shocked. Bush sputtered and stumbled, mangling words ("Kosovanians," "Grecians") and looking slightly desperate. It was like watching a fat man cross an icy street; I couldn't relax till it was over. Bush clearly was rattled by public speaking. For the first time, it dawned on me that he might be insecure.

By November 2000, my view of Bush had changed substantially. I still strongly preferred him to Gore, who even before he grew a beard struck me as far too odd to be president. But I was less convinced I knew what Bush believed. After months of covering the campaign, I still didn't understand what "compassionate conservatism" meant, much less what Bush thought about America's role in the world. Not that it seemed to matter at the time. It was a virtually issue-free election. I had trouble imagining that much was at stake.

Then came September 11. Bush's approval ratings immediately soared to unbelievable heights. Yet the attacks initially made me sorry I'd voted for him. For most of that day, as my wife and children stayed inside our house listening to the roar of fighter jets overhead, and black smoke from the Pentagon hovered above our neighborhood, Bush failed to return to Washington. My family sat unprotected a few miles from the scene of a terrorist attack, Bush hid in a bunker on some faraway military base.

It infuriated me, as did the subsequent excuses from White House spokesmen. There was a risk in coming back, they said. Of course there was. That's the point. Leaders must take risks, sometimes physical ones. Bush should have elbowed his Secret Service detail out of the way and returned in a display of fearlessness to his nation's capital. I found it distressingly revealing that he didn't.

Then, a little more than a week later, Bush redeemed himself. His address on September 20 to a joint session of Congress wasn't simply a good speech. It was a nearly perfect one, possibly the greatest delivered by any president in American history. Bush seemed calm, resolute but not bellicose—completely, reassuringly in charge. His stammers and tics had disappeared.

"It is natural to wonder if America's future is one of fear," he said to a nation that was wondering just that. "I know there are struggles ahead and dangers to face. But this country will define our times, not be defined by them. As long as the United States of America is determined and strong, this will not be an age of terror; this will be an age of liberty, here and across the world. Great harm has been done to us. We have suffered great loss. And in our grief and anger, we have found our mission and our moment. . . . The advance of human freedom—the great achievement of our time, and the great hope of every time—now depends on us."

For once, Bush had found precisely the right words: our mission and our moment. Out of the calamity of 9/11, Bush promised a new purpose for America, which was also the original purpose. America didn't ask to lead the world, or even want to. The responsibility had been thrust upon us by events beyond our control. Bush seemed to understand the task and embrace it. He spelled out the terms directly, without euphemism or embarrassment. The hijackers weren't misguided, he said. They were evil, and so is the ideology that drove them.

The speech was lovely and true. In living rooms across America, including mine, people listened with tears streaming down their cheeks. Bush seemed like a new man. It was later reported that he considered himself empowered by God to lead the nation after 9/11. I believe that. Bush believed this. I also believe, on this night at least, that he may have been right.

Over the next few months, however, Bush slowly reverted to the man he had been. He wasted critical momentum tinkering with the Department of Homeland Security, as if the obvious response to 9/11 was bureaucratic reshuffling. His administration alienated even potential allies by responding to the slightest criticism in a tone that fluctuated between high-handed and contemptuous.

And then, of course—famously, fatally—Bush began planning for a war in Iraq. It was obvious from the beginning what was happening. Bush intended to topple Saddam Hussein. He said as much, in public, repeatedly. But it was still hard for me to believe it. *This* was the next step in the new war on terror Bush had described on September 20? At the time, he promised to avenge 9/11 with a campaign "unlike any other we have ever seen." But a conventional invasion of Iraq, with tens of thousands of American soldiers driving north in tanks through the desert toward Baghdad? We had definitely seen that before.

Hardly anyone else seemed to believe Bush would go through with it, either. A few who did made self-discrediting arguments against the war. Like Clinton, Bush has been blessed by the rage and paranoia of his enemies. In late 2002, some Democrats began to suggest that the drive to invade Iraq had political motives. The administration, they said, was planning to start a war—open-ended and unprovoked, against an enemy thought to have chemical weapons ready to use on the battlefield—simply to gain advantage in the midterm elections.

There has never been a more stupid critique of anything. In fact, the invasion amounted to a remarkable risk. No political consultant would ever have suggested it. Had Bush not invaded Iraq, his reelection would have been all but assured. As it stands, he may well lose because of it.

It's hard not to admire his boldness. However wrong his conclusions have been, Bush has described the larger war against terrorists with the clarity it requires. They are evil. We are not. Only one of us will win. Bush says this often, and when he does, there is no ironic inflection in his voice. He means it. And he is right.

Yet some of the anti-Bush critique was accurate. As he has managed and mismanaged the war in Iraq, Bush has proved stubborn, uncommunicative, and slow to adapt to changing realities. His enemies cite these qualities as evidence of Bush's arrogance. But Bush isn't inflexible because he's arrogant. He's inflexible because he's weak.

And it is because he is weak that we invaded Iraq. Bush may have been uncertain about how to fight terrorism after the fall of the Taliban, but many of those around him were not. Years before, they had concluded that an Iraq without Saddam would lead to a more stable, less dangerous Middle East. Against compelling evidence to the contrary, Bush accepted their judgment.

I believe this was a colossal error—made in good faith, but a mistake nonetheless. It will be hard for me to vote for a man who has done something so reckless.

And that's a problem, because unless you believe that the threat from Islamic extremism has been seriously overhyped—and I don't—John Kerry isn't really an alternative. So it's Bush or no one. That will be my choice on November 2. I still haven't decided which will get my vote.

Esquire contributor Tucker Carlson is the cohost of CNN's Crossfire *and the host of* Tucker Carlson. Unfiltered *on PBS.*

Why I Want to Vote for Bush

By ANDREW SULLIVAN

GEORGE W. BUSH has grappled with some of the gravest crises of any recent president and handled himself and his job with courage, clarity, and decisiveness. When he came into office, the world seemed preternaturally quiet. We heard the platitudes about "peace and prosperity" in the 2000 campaign, but we soon found out that Bill Clinton's legacy was underpinned by negligence that made his successor's task a monumental one. The economy was tilting into a fast decline after an unsustainable, reckless bubble. Far away in Afghanistan, Osama bin Laden, whom Clinton had declined to capture when he had the chance, was training twenty thousand jihadists to wreak murderous mayhem across the globe.

But on the two vital issues, the economy and terrorism, Bush did the right and difficult thing. He pushed through a large tax cut that helped pull the U.S. out of its tailspin and deflected the real possibility of a global depression. And when catastrophe struck on 9/11, Bush did what a leader should do. He grasped the true extent of the danger, rallied the country with one of the greatest speeches ever delivered by a president to a sitting Congress, and steadily built a coalition to take out Al Qaeda in Afghanistan, destroying its bases, capturing or killing a majority of its leading members, and launching a worldwide offensive to bring the other jihadists to justice. People forget now that there was a chorus of elite opposition to the Afghan war, but Bush saw it through.

And he refused to stop there. He also understood that the underlying threat was not just one terrorist network but a nexus of states and regimes eager to buttress and support the mass murderers of fanatical Islam. The most frightening was Saddam Hussein's Mafia-run Iraq, a country in violation of umpteen UN resolutions, with widespread links to terror groups and a fervent desire to acquire weapons of mass destruction. Bush and Cheney saw 9/11 and realized it could have been so much worse. A nuclear, chemical, or biological attack in a major city would kill not thousands but tens of thousands. And the president didn't have the luxury of merely hoping it wouldn't happen.

So Bush risked his presidency on a war. In the process, he shifted U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East from a defensive, piecemeal attempt to prop up failed dictatorships in return for oil into a strategy to convert the region to democracy. The war was a stunning success. The coalition occupied a country of twenty-five million, defended by a ruthless cadre of armed fanatics with nothing to lose, and achieved military victory in three weeks. Despite a subsequent insurgency by former Saddamites and jihadist terrorists, the country was turned over to a representative government in a little more than a year, with elections sched-

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uled for January 2005. Elections! In an Arab country! Nothing this profound has occurred since the fall of the Berlin Wall. Yes, there have been costs. almost nine hundred U S. military deaths, thousands of Iraqi civilian deaths. But the oxygen of freedom has been brought to the Middle East for the first time in memory. In the long run, Bush will be deemed a hero for his fortitude

At home, Bush steered the economy into a period of renewed growth and mounting employment. He passed an education-reform bill that for the first time insisted on real standards in public education. He passed a Medicare drug program for seniors, something that had long eluded Bill Clinton. But all his centrist achievements were drowned out by a chorus of cynics who wanted this accidental president defeated far more than they wanted victory in the war on terror or a healthy economy at home.

Yet Bush endured, his steeliness married to a mild-mannered folksiness that inspired hearts in the middle of the country In today's polarized climate, few presidents could have escaped without bitter criticism. But fewer still could have weathered it with Bush's calm, cheeriness, and grace.

But Why I Can't

By ANDREW SULLIVAN

THE PRESIDENCY OF GEORGE W. BUSH—billed as a force for moderation and "compassionate conservatism"—ended up extremist, harsh, and anything but conservative. He could have cut tax rates across the board and removed tax loopholes for wealthy corporations. Instead, he cut taxes substantively only for the very rich, clotted the tax code with even more corporate giveaways, and ended the one tax that penalized inherited rather than earned wealth, the estate tax. At the same time, Bush let the federal government rip, expanding spending at a faster rate than any president since LBJ. While Ronald Reagan cut nondefense domestic discretionary spending by 9 percent, Bush increased it by more than 25 percent. He reversed reforms in agricultural subsidies and created a vast new bureaucracy in the Department of Homeland Security He poured money into education, labor, and pork-barrel projects, abetted by a Republican Congress that preferred bribing its way back to power rather than keeping the books balanced. The final straw was the Medicare drug entitlement that linked the fastest-growing sector of the population—the aging baby boomers—with a product whose price was increasing faster than almost anything else: prescription drugs. The result was a massive deficit and projected bankruptcy in the near- or long-term future.

Worse, the president refused to concede there was any problem at all. "Deficits don't matter," was Vice-President Dick Cheney's mantra.

In the war, Bush made two huge errors. First, he banked the United States' international credibility on the assertion that Saddam had stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction. Those stockpiles didn't exist Worse, Bush refused to acknowledge this When asked by Diane Sawyer in late 2003 to account for the discrepancy between the evidence of a program for WMDs and actual stockpiles, Bush quipped, "What's the difference?" The difference is that America's entire reputation rested on the distinction. By his insouciance, Bush ensured that support for the war at home would be weakened and that no future preemptive war on the basis of intelligence would ever get international or domestic approval again

His second error was underestimating the potential for an insurgency after the fall of Baghdad. The result was a postwar that is still a war. There were far too few troops to keep order—something that had been predicted—and no plans to change course. This incompetence and obstinacy meant that an entire window of opportunity in Iraq was thrown away. The coup de grâce was the Abu Ghraib prison abuses—perhaps the most damaging blow to America's reputation in a generation. The revelation of those abuses was followed by the discovery of memos from the Justice Department that clearly tried to make a legal case for the permissibility of torture. Again, Bush seemed unable to grasp the seriousness of the wound or to hold anyone in his circle accountable for it.

In Iraq, more than a hundred thousand American troops will remain indefinitely, trying to hold together a fledgling new regime that has yet to win substantive public support. They have responsibility for the success of the mission, and yet they have ceded power to others. It is a recipe for disaster

In 2000, Bush campaigned as a "uniter, not a divider." Yet he has catered incessantly to the far religious Right, infusing his secular office with religious undertones and backing the most radical measure of the fundamentalists, a constitutional amendment to ban any civil protections for gay couples seeking civil marriages. He refused to fund most new research on embryonic stem cells, he fused his political operation with churches, he tried to funnel public funds to sectarian groups, and he claimed that his foreign policy was a product of his relationship with the Almighty

In other words, he got cleanly on the wrong side of the civil-rights movement of his time, and he made the Republican party inseparable from a religious movement Blacks and Hispanics remain leery; gays are lost for a generation. By the start of his reelection campaign, his strategy was to drive up support from the white, old, fundamencalist South, where alone he felt at home. He therefore left the country even more deeply divided and embittered than he found it—no easy task

Give him another four years and he'll embitter it some more

The Colossal Battle

By TIM LaHAYE

THE 2004 ELECTION may go down in history as the most important election since the Civil War—a colossal battle between the most conservative president to occupy the White House since Ronald Reagan and one of the most liberal U S. senators in Congress. Its outcome will alter the course of this nation for decades to come. ¶ America is at war! Not just with terrorists from abroad who want to destroy our country as we know it, but with anarchists who have worked from within for the better part of a century to attack our nation's values and principles as outlined by the Founding Fathers in our Constitution. Their weapon of choice? The judiciary branch of our federal government, consisting of the Supreme Court (which has a five-to-four liberal majority) and the federal court system, with its more than eight hundred predominantly liberal judges.

The supreme issue of our day is whether or not we shall continue to allow unelected liberal *judicial activists* to make laws that were never in the minds of our Founding Fathers. Shouldn't these judges utilize *judicial restraint* and base their decisions on what the Constitution means, leaving the lawmaking and constitutional changes up to Congress and the voters, through the constitutionally mandated process?

After watching for more than sixty years how our federal government works, I have concluded that the most important task of any president is the appointment of federal judges to the bench. Liberals understood this throughout the twentieth century Whenever Democrats controlled the presidency, they appointed like-minded liberals to the judiciary from the ACLU or Harvard Law School. Whenever Republicans were in the White House, the media cried out for the appointment of *bipartisan judges* In most cases, the conservative president heeded those calls and appointed *moderates*, who more often than not have cast their votes with other liberals on the Court.

In my lifetime, I have seen only one conservative appointed to the Supreme Court by a Democrat. His name was Byron White, and he was JFK's all-American football hero. All other Democratic appointees are ideological liberals, including Ruth Bader Ginsburg, former board member of the ACLU, and Stephen Breyer, a liberal law professor.

Today this liberal ideology dominates the federal court system. Is it any wonder that we now find ourselves embroiled in debates involving the removal of the Ten Commandments from our federal buildings; the attempted removal of "one nation under God" from the pledge of allegiance; the attempted removal of IN GOD WE TRUST from our currency, the ongoing practice of abortion, including partial-birth abortion, and the legalization of homosexual marriages? Is it fair that a handful of liberal judges decide these matters? Is it fair that the voters of this nation have no voice on these issues? And in the case of same-sex marriages, is it fair that George W Bush would be forced to resort to a *constitutional amendment* in order to counter the actions of a wayward judge?

The presidential election of 2004 may determine if the United States will have the opportunity to return to the Judeo-Christian values upon which it was founded. It is my belief that it was these values, guaranteeing freedom for all, that made ours the greatest nation on earth. If John Kerry is elected, we can expect him to continue the tradition of appointing radical, left-wing liberals to all federal judiciary positions and to his administration, with probable appointees such as Alan Dershowitz or Laurence Tribe taking the bench. If George Bush is reelected, you can expect him to appoint constitutional constructionists like Charles Pickering or Al Gonzales to the bench, judges who believe their duty is to interpret the Constitution accurately, not subvert it.

This crucial difference will affect the laws and people of this country for decades to come Currently, the Supreme Court consists of three liberals, three conservatives, and three moderates. Based on the present age and health of the nine members of the Court, the next president will probably have the opportunity to appoint two to four new members. Obviously, the political philosophy of the court, and hence the laws it creates, will be determined by the outcome of the 2004 election.

And don't forget the Senate. The importance of the Supreme Court to the future of this nation may have been lost on the Republican party for most of the last century, but it has certainly not been lost on the Democrats, particularly one of the most liberal of all U. S. senators, Ted Kennedy It was Kennedy who introduced a whole new method of attack for destroying the chosen nominee of a sitting president by his personally led crucifixion of President Reagan's judicial appointee Robert Bork.

Knowing that the brilliant and conservative Judge Bork would probably influence one or two other members to vote with him during court discussions, Kennedy recruited Tony Podesta, president of People for the American Way, to launch what can only be described as the most vicious attack on the character and qualifications of a Supreme Court nominee in the history of America. He was assisted by other liberal Democrats at a cost of more than $2 million. They succeeded in so distorting the past judicial decisions of Judge Bork that they destroyed any chance of his confirmation by the Senate. The detestable practice of crucifying the reputation or blocking the presidential appointment of conservative judges to the bench continues to this day Take, for example, George Bush's judicial nominees Miguel Estrada and Priscilla [*continued on page 226*]

Tim LaHaye is the president of Tim LaHaye Ministries and a cofounder of the Moral Majority. He is the coauthor, with Jerry Jenkins, of the Left Behind *series of biblical-prophecy novels, which have sold more than sixty-two million copies.*



The Case Against George W. Bush

By RON REAGAN

The son of the fortieth president of the United States takes a hard look at the son of the forty-first and does not like what he sees

IT MAY HAVE BEEN THE GUY IN THE HOOD teetering on the stool, electrodes clamped to his genitals. Or smirking Lynndie England and her leash. Maybe it was the smarmy memos tapped out by soft-fingered lawyers itching to justify such barbarism. The grudging, lunatic retreat of the neocons from their long-standing assertion that Saddam was in cahoots with Osama didn't hurt. Even the Enron audiotapes and their celebration of craven sociopathy likely played a part. As a result of all these displays and countless smaller ones, you could feel, a couple of months back, as summer spread across the country, the ground shifting beneath your feet. Not unlike that scene in *The Day After Tomorrow*, than in the aters, in which the giant ice shelf splits asunder, this was more a paradigm shift than anything strictly tectonic. No cataclysmic ice age, admittedly, yet something was in the air, and people were inhaling deeply. I began to get calls from friends whose parents had always voted Republican, "but not this time." There was the staid Zbigniew Brzezinski on the staid *NewsHour with Jim Lehrer* sneering at the "Orwellian language" flowing out of the Pentagon. Word spread through the usual channels that old hands from the days of Bush the Elder were quietly (but not *too* quietly) appalled by his son's misadventure in Iraq. Suddenly, everywhere you went, a surprising number of folks seemed to have had just about enough of what the Bush administration was dishing out. A fresh age appeared on the horizon,

Illustration by TIM O'BRIEN

accompanied by the sound of scales falling from people's eyes. It felt something like a demonstration of that highest of American prerogatives and the most deeply cherished American freedom: dissent.

Oddly, even my father's funeral contributed. Throughout that long, stately, overtelevised week in early June, items would appear in the newspaper discussing the Republicans' eagerness to capitalize (subtly, tastefully) on the outpouring of affection for my father and turn it to Bush's advantage for the fall election. The familiar "Heir to Reagan" puffballs were reinflated and loosed over the proceedings like (subtle, tasteful) Mylar balloons. Predictably, this backfired. People were treated to a side-by-side comparison—Ronald W. Reagan versus George W. Bush—and it's no surprise who suffered for it. Misty-eyed with nostalgia, people set aside old political gripes for a few days and remembered what friend and foe always conceded to Ronald Reagan. He was damned impressive in the role of leader of the free world. A sign in the crowd, spotted during the slow roll to the Capitol rotunda, seemed to sum up the mood—a portrait of my father and the words NOW THERE WAS A PRESIDENT.

The comparison underscored something important. And the guy on the stool, Lynndie, and her grinning cohorts, they brought the word. The Bush administration can't be trusted. The parade of Bush officials before various commissions and committees—Paul Wolfowitz, who couldn't quite remember how many young Americans had been sacrificed on the altar of his ideology; John Ashcroft, lip quivering as, for a delicious, fleeting moment, it looked as if Senator Joe Biden might just come over the table at him—these were a continuing reminder. The Enron creeps, too—a reminder of how certain environments and particular habits of mind can erode common decency. People noticed. A tipping point had been reached. The issue of credibility was back on the table. The L-word was in circulation. Not the tired old bromide *liberal*. That's so 1988. No, this time something much more potent: *liar*.

Politicians will stretch the truth. They'll exaggerate their accomplishments, paper over their gaffes. Spin has long been the lingua franca of the political realm. But George W. Bush and his administration have taken "normal" mendacity to a startling new level far beyond lies of convenience. On top of the usual massaging of public perception, they traffic in big lies, indulge in any number of symptomatic small lies, and, ultimately, have come to embody dishonesty itself. They are a lie. And people, finally, have started catching on.

None of this, needless to say, guarantees Bush a one-term presidency. The far-right wing of the country—nearly one third of us by some estimates—continues to regard all who refuse to drink the Kool-Aid (liberals, rationalists, Europeans, et cetera) as agents of Satan. Bush could show up on video canoodling with Paris Hilton and still bank their vote. Right-wing talking heads continue painting anyone who fails to genuflect deeply enough as a "hater," and therefore a nut job, probably a crypto-Islamist car bomber. But these protestations have taken on a hysterical, almost comically desperate tone. It's one thing to get trashed by Michael Moore. But when Nobel laureates, a vast majority of the scientific community, and a host of current and former diplomats, intelligence operatives, and military officials line up against you, it becomes increasingly difficult to characterize the opposition as fringe wackos.

Does anyone really favor an administration that so shamelessly lies? One that so tenaciously clings to secrecy, not to protect the American people, but to protect itself? That so willfully misrepresents its true aims and so knowingly misleads the people from whom it derives its power? I simply cannot think so. And to come to the same conclusion does not make you guilty of swallowing some liberal critique of the Bush presidency, because that's not what this is. This is the critique of a person who thinks that lying at the top levels of his government is abhorrent. Call it the honest guy's critique of George W. Bush.

THE MOST EGREGIOUS EXAMPLES OF distortion and misdirection—which the administration even now cannot bring itself to repudiate—involve our putative "War on Terror" and our subsequent foray into Iraq.

During his campaign for the presidency, Mr. Bush pledged a more "humble" foreign policy. "I would take the use of force very seriously," he said. "I would be guarded in my approach." Other countries would resent us "if we're an arrogant nation." He sniffed at the notion of "nation building." "Our military is meant to fight and win wars. . . . And when it gets overextended, morale drops." International cooperation and consensus building would be the cornerstone of a Bush administration's approach to the larger world. Given candidate Bush's remarks, it was hard to imagine him, as president, flipping a stiff middle finger at the world and charging off adventuring in the Middle East.

But didn't 9/11 reshuffle the deck, changing everything? Didn't Mr. Bush, on September 12, 2001, awaken to the fresh realization that bad guys in charge of Islamic nations constitute an entirely new and grave threat to us and have to be ruthlessly confronted lest they threaten the American homeland again? Wasn't Saddam Hussein rushed to the front of the line because he was complicit with the hijackers and in some measure responsible for the atrocities in Washington, D. C., and at the tip of Manhattan?

Well, no.

As Bush's former Treasury secretary, Paul O'Neill, and his onetime "terror czar," Richard A. Clarke, have made clear, the president, with the enthusiastic encouragement of Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and Paul Wolfowitz, was contemplating action against Iraq from day one. "From the start, we were building the case against Hussein and looking at how we could take him out," O'Neill said. All they needed was an excuse. Clarke got the same impression from within the White House. Afghanistan had to be dealt with first, that's where the actual perpetrators were, after all. But the Tahban was a mere appetizer; Saddam was the entrée. (Or who knows? The soup course?) It was simply a matter of convincing the American public (and our representatives) that war was justified.

The real—but elusive—prime mover behind the 9/11 attacks, Osama bin Laden, was quickly relegated to a back burner (a staff member at Fox News—the cable-TV outlet of the Bush White House—told me a year ago that mere mention of bin Laden's name was forbidden within the company, lest we be reminded that the actual bad guy remained at large) while Saddam's Iraq became International Enemy Number One. Just like that, a country whose economy had been reduced to shambles by international sanctions, whose military was less than half the size it had been when the U. S. Army rolled over it during the first Gulf war, that had extensive no-flight zones imposed on it in the north and south as well as constant aerial and satellite surveillance, and whose lethal weapons and capacity to produce such weapons had been destroyed or seriously degraded by UN inspection teams became, in Mr. Bush's words, "a threat of unique urgency" to the most powerful nation on earth.

Fanciful but terrifying scenarios were introduced. Unmanned aircraft, drones, had been built for missions targeting the U. S., Bush told the nation. "We don't want the smoking gun to be a mushroom cloud," National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice deadpanned to CNN. And, Bush maintained, "Iraq could decide on any given day to provide a biological or chemical weapon to a terrorist group or individual terrorists." We "know" Iraq possesses such weapons, Rumsfeld and Vice-President Cheney assured us. We even "know" where they are hidden. After several months of this mumbo jumbo, 70 percent of Americans had embraced the fantasy that Saddam destroyed the World Trade Center.

ALL THESE ASSERTIONS HAVE PROVED to be baseless and, we've since discovered, were regarded with skepticism by experts at the time they were made. But contrary opinions were derided, ignored, or covered up in the rush to war. Even as of this writing, Dick Cheney clings to his mad assertion that Saddam was somehow at the nexus of a worldwide terror network.

And then there was Abu Ghraib. Our "war president" may have been justified in his assumption that Americans are a warrior people. He pushed the envelope in thinking we'd be content as an occupying power, but he was sadly mistaken if he thought that ordinary Americans would tolerate an image of themselves as torturers. To be fair, the torture was meant to be secret. So were the memos justifying such treatment that had floated around the White House, Pentagon, and Justice Department for more than a year before the first photos came to light. The neocons no doubt appreciate that few of us have the stones to practice the New Warfare. Could you slip a pair of women's panties over the head of a naked, cowering stranger while forcing him to masturbate? What would you say while sodomizing him with a toilet plunger? Is keeping someone awake till he hallucinates inhumane treatment or merely "sleep management"?

Most of us know the answers to these questions, so it was incumbent upon the administration to pretend that Abu Ghraib was an aberration, not policy. Investigations, we were assured, were already under way; relevant bureaucracies would offer unstinting cooperation, the handful of miscreants would be sternly disciplined. After all, they didn't "represent the best of what America's all about." As anyone who'd watched the proceedings of the 9/11 Commission could have predicted, what followed was the usual administration strategy of stonewalling, obstruction, and obfuscation. The appointment of investigators was stalled; documents were withheld, including the full report by Major General Antonio Taguba, who headed the Army's primary investigation into the abuses at Abu Ghraib. A favorite moment for many featured John McCain growing apoplectic as Donald Rumsfeld and an entire tableful of army brass proved unable to answer the simple question: Who was in charge at Abu Ghraib?

The Bush administration no doubt had its real reasons for invading and occupying Iraq. They've simply chosen not to share them with the American public. They sought justification for ignoring the Geneva Convention and other statutes prohibiting torture and inhumane treatment of prisoners but were loath to acknowledge as much. They may have ideas worth discussing, but they don't welcome the rest of us in the conversation. They don't trust us because they don't dare expose their true agendas to the light of day. There is a surreal quality to all this. Occupation is liberation, Iraq is sovereign, but we're in control; Saddam is in Iraqi custody, but we've got him; we'll get out as soon as an elected Iraqi government asks us, but we'll be there for years to come. Which is what we counted on in the first place, only with rose petals and easy coochie.

This Möbius reality finds its domestic analogue in the perversely cynical "Clear Skies" and "Healthy Forests" sloganeering at Bush's EPA and in the administration's irresponsible tax cutting and other fiscal shenanigans. But the Bush administration has always worn strangely tinted shades, and you wonder to what extent Mr. Bush himself lives in a world of his own imagining.

And chances are your America and George W. Bush's America are not the same place. If you are dead center on the earning scale in real-world twenty-first-century America, you make a bit less than $32,000 a year, and $32,000 is not a sum that Mr. Bush has ever associated with getting by in his world. Bush, who has always managed to fail upwards in his various careers, has never had a job the way you have a job—where not showing up one morning gets you fired, costing you your health benefits. He may find it difficult to relate personally to any of the nearly two million citizens who've lost their jobs under his administration, the first administration since Herbert Hoover's to post a net loss of jobs. Mr. Bush has never had to worry that he couldn't afford the best available health care for his children. For him, forty-three million people without health insurance may be no more than a politically inconvenient abstraction. When Mr. Bush talks about the economy, he is not talking about your economy. His economy is filled with pals called Kenny-boy who fly around in their own airplanes. In Bush's economy, his world, friends relocate offshore to avoid paying taxes. Taxes are for chumps like you. You are not a friend. You're the help. When the party Mr. Bush is hosting in his world ends, you'll be left picking shrimp toast out of the carpet.

ALL ADMINISTRATIONS WILL DISSEMBLE, distort, or outright lie when their backs are against the wall, when honesty begins to look like political suicide. But this administration seems to be reflexively, as if it were simply the easiest option for busy folks with a lot on their minds. While the big lies are more damning and of immeasurably greater import to the nation, it is the small, unnecessary prevarications that may be diagnostic. Who lies when they don't have to? When the simple truth, though perhaps embarrassing in the short run, is nevertheless in one's long-term self-interest? Why would a president whose calling card is his alleged rock-solid integrity waste his chief asset for penny-ante stakes? Habit, perhaps. Or an inability to admit even small mistakes.

> My father's Party is a far cry from Bush's, with its cringing obeisance to the religious Right and kill-anything-that-moves attack instincts.

Mr. Bush's tendency to meander beyond the bounds of truth was evident during the 2000 campaign but was largely ignored by the mainstream media. His untruths simply didn't fit the agreed-upon narrative. While generally acknowledged to be lacking in experience, depth, and other qualifications typically considered useful in a leader of the free world, Bush was portrayed as a decent fellow nonetheless, one whose straightforwardness was a given. None of that "what the meaning of *is* is" business for him. And, God knows, no furtive, taxpayer-funded fellatio sessions with the interns. Al Gore, on the other hand, was depicted as a dubious self-reinventor, stained like a certain blue dress by Bill Clinton's prurient transgressions. He would spend valuable weeks explaining away statements—"I invented the Internet"—that he never made in the first place. All this left the coast pretty clear for Bush. [*continued on page 227*]

Drayahh de Mayonh}

{ **DREA DE MATTEO** has flipped, trading *The Sopranos* for the NBC siteom *Joey*. But we couldn't resist asking her to inform one last time—Adriana style—on her personal life. }





A Woman We Love

For having been brutally killed on a *Sopranos* shocker last season, **Drea de Matteo** is doing pretty well. The thickly accented, big-haired Adriana is soon to be resurrected as Gina Tribbiani, the thickly accented, big-haired sister of Matt LeBlanc. While much has been made of her birth in the New York City borough of Queens—an origin that meshes nicely with the type of gum-snapping women she plays—she left the neighborhood during elementary school for Manhattan's Upper East Side. In person, de Matteo's voice is husky, like her characters', but her accent is hardly Fran Drescher, and her coif is hair spray free. "Everyone still thinks I'm just a trashy fucking Queens kind of chick, hanging out on street corners drinking beers," she says. Here, seven other de Matteo truths you probably didn't know.

By **REED TUCKER**
Photographs by
NOE DEWITT

1. She thought the whole Jersey-girl shtick was behind her.
"The Joey thing was the last thing I ever expected in my fucking life. It's TV, which I thought I was done with. It's playing a character with an accent I thought I was done with. But I kept saying, before I quit acting, I want to do some comedy. Knowing that some miserable fuck is going to go home at night and turn the TV on to get away from life—which is why I used to watch sitcoms when I was young, because I was so miserable all the time. It's nice to know that you can make some people laugh after a long day's work. Hell, yeah, I see the value in that."

2. She'd never even seen *Friends* before she landed *Joey*.
"It's not like I never wanted to see it. I was always running around and had no idea what times shows are on. So I watched the finale. I wanted to know what all the hype was about."

3. She spent most of elementary school in therapy.
"I was the shyest person in the class. This might have been third grade. I was that kid in the corner with all my hair in my face. I'd grab the biggest book I could possibly find and cover up most of my face and my body with it. Trembling. I played sick a lot. I missed more school than I attended. I couldn't read out loud in the classroom. I'd get really shaky and break out in hives. I only became not shy in the past year. I think maybe being on *The Sopranos* gave me some confidence."

4. The women on *The Sopranos* are scarier than the men.
"There are no girls on the show, just broads. Aida Turturro? That's one tough broad right there. Lorraine [Bracco] is a tough broad. People want to cast me as the tough bread, but I don't play that easily. I look mean because of my eyebrows, maybe, but I play the shy, weird crybaby better."

5. She grew up in a haunted house.
"In Manhattan, we lived in a brownstone that used to belong to Aretha Franklin. That place was haunted. That's probably why she moved out. We had a rough time in that place. As soon as we moved in there, everybody went crazy—fighting, screaming, yelling, getting robbed. It was just a weird energy in there. It looked like Dracula's house."

6. She regrets getting her tattoos.
"I have ten or twelve around town on the body. They're all little. As soon as I get them, I'm like, Why'd I just do this? I have to cover them [while filming], and it adds another hour to my makeup-chair experience in the morning, which I hate more than anything. They're all names of people who are meaningful to me, and if I were to remove them, that would be superstitiously bad, because all the people are still alive."

7. People still won't return her calls.
"My boyfriend [Shooter Jennings, son of country star Waylon Jennings] and I were doing a tribute show to Waylon. Showtime agreed to do it. They wanted me to go out and get the talent so they'd just have to put it on the air. Shooter and I wrote letters to every musician: Neil Young, the White Stripes, Bob Dylan, Kid Rock, Norah Jones, Beck, and pretty much everyone said yes. So we contacted Showtime and said we were ready to go. *They Never Returned My Phone Call.* Just gimme one phone call back to say, 'Hey, honey. We're not going to do it. Something else has come up. All that work you did was in vain. So now you can go fuck yourself.'"

Areas of Detail

True style is all about getting your key areas, from your neck to your ankle, just right. To give you a leg up, Esquire zeroes in on your body's six most important zones and shows how to make them work for you.

Photographs by Nigel Cox

The Waist

As young men get into tailoring like never before, designers are making more fitted suit jackets and narrower pants than ever. Whether your preferred style is strict and classic or modern with no more than a slight passing curve to enhance the shape of your body, look for fitted waistlines and narrower sleeves everywhere from the big stores to niche designer boutiques. Getting a close fit at the waist and torso is critical. Three-button single-breasted wool chalk-stripe suit ($2,995); cotton shirt ($295); and silk tie ($135) by Ralph Lauren Purple Label.

The Wrist

You wear the jacket, and not the shirt, all day around, so make sure the sleeve length is right on. If the shirt cuff covers your shirt cuff, it's too long. It should just reach the base of your thumb, flashing a noble inch of cuff plus that watch you deftly matched to your cuff links. Wool-and-cashmere jacket ($1,895) by Gian Luca; cotton shirt ($295) by Ralph Lauren Purple Label; leather belt ($450) by Bottega Veneta; cotton scarf ($195) and yellow-gold watch ($4,335) by Dunhill; yellow-gold watch ($63,000) by Cartier; cufflinks ($175) by John Hardy.



The Neck

The few square inches between the pleasure of your suit and the top button of your shirt says much about you as your résumé. And are given far easier to read. And expensive formal suit calls for a good shirt, too. It's no use skimping. That said, well-constructed shirts, in interesting but sensible patterns and at reasonable prices are everywhere. The new formal aesthetic also suggests higher collars and wider cuffs. Three-button wool blazer (part of set, $1,200) by Sal [illegible]; Egyptian cotton shirt ($350) by [illegible]; silk tie ($65) by Jack S[illegible]; pocket square ($65) by Brioni; watch ($31,600) by A. Lange [illegible]



The Foot

Ever heard the adage about meeting Italian businessmen—while they shake your hand, they look at your shoes? The quality of your footwear is one of the [illegible] professional signifiers. A pair of carefully [illegible] elegantly worn shoes is critical. The [illegible]er and narrower the shape of the [illegible], the more it works with tailored [illegible]. And it should fit from the get-[illegible]; don't accept that they'll ease in. [illegible]. Three-button wool chalk ($1,420), cotto[illegible] shirt ($260) and [illegible] by Ermenegildo Zegna; leather shoes by Dolce & Gabbana; stainl[illegible] ($2,695) by [illegible] ($4,900) by [illegible]



The Shoulder

Nowhere is the paradox of imperfect perfection more clear than in the setting of a sleeve into the shoulder. A classic fitted European suit will have an inevitable puckering around the shoulder seam, the result of having a small armhole and more fabric around its edge than it requires. For an Italian devotee of the finer things in life, this sartorial cue is a clear signal of status because—like the wavy edge of a hand-stitched lapel—its imperfection denotes a job done expensively by hand. Three-but[illegible] jacket (of suit: S$ 500) by Kiton; cotton shirt ($295) by Loro Piana; silk tie ($110; finest of Ch[illegible] by Robert Talbott; silk pocket square ($65) by Brio[illegible]

The Ankle

Nothing is less elegant in a trouser than acres of unwanted wool pooling around the ankles. Your pants should reach your shoes but show no more than a slight break in the crease. No break and your trousers are too perfect, too much and you'll look as if you borrowed them from your big brother. So unless you buy your suit, get the store's tailor to fix the length properly. It may mean waiting a couple more days, but it's worth[illegible]

FOR STORE INFO[illegible] SEE PAGE 229

What I've Learned

ESPN

Television network, 25, Bristol, Connecticut

INTERVIEWED BY CAL FUSSMAN // PHOTOGRAPH BY MICHAEL EDWARDS

The difference between sports now and when we started is bigger, stronger, faster athletes. Overhyped events. Different drugs. More sex. And a lot more money. [1]

Sports is a little less pure now than it was when I was thirteen. But then, everything is. [2]

With wisdom comes clarity. And with clarity comes a falling away of the scales from your eyes. Fandom is one of the casualties of working where we work. [3]

The difference between sex and sports? There's a time-out every now and then with sex. With sports, you can go nonstop. [2]

We have never overestimated sports fans' desire for sports. [4]

Volume, volume, volume. [3]

If you've got something good to say, don't doll it up. [2]

People can see that we write our own stuff. You can fake it in other areas of your life. But you cannot fake anything on ESPN. Because your viewer is hardcore, man. [5]

My favorite nickname? Bert "Be Home" Blyleven. And I've always liked John "Tonight Let It Be" Lowenstein. Or how about Andre "Bad Moon" Rison? He has it tattooed on his arm: BAD MOON. And there's no way he'd ever heard of Creedence Clearwater Revival. [2]

It's just something from the neighborhood, that's all. Somebody can say something, and if somebody agrees with him, *booya!* It's an affirmation, an expression of energy. [6]

Even in interviews, Michael Jordan competed. He'd make you ask the right question. Or he would ask you a question. He'd make you work to get the answer. Jordan wanted you to earn the interview. [7]

We didn't get here by being timid. Reagan didn't say, "Please tear down this wall." [3]

September 6, 1995: The night Cal Ripken passed Lou Gehrig for the all-time consecutive-games-played streak was a magical night. We were quiet for twenty-three minutes during the celebration and, funny, we got lauded for it. Here's a business where we get paid to speak. And the most credit I've ever gotten is for the twenty-three minutes when I said nothing. Maybe there's a message there. [2]

In an on-air marriage, you know never to step on one another's toes. In real marriage, of course, we do it all the time. [5]

Keith Olbermann was the most talented guy I'd ever worked with. He got restless and wanted to move on. When I knew it was coming to an end, it was difficult. I was fortunate to work with him for five years, and you can't re-create that. Lewis never found another Martin. Abbott never found another Costello. Laurel never found another Hardy. In my small world, that's sort of how I felt when Olbermann left. [7]

I don't watch sports at home. Does a teamster go home and drive his truck up and down the driveway? Does a veterinarian go home and operate on his pet German shepherd? No. I go home, read the front page, read books. Here's a shocker: I talk to my wife. [3]

The term *talent* to describe those of us who work in front of the camera is stupid. It seems to indicate that people on air are talented and the others aren't. There are a lot of talented researchers. Respect the researchers. [6]

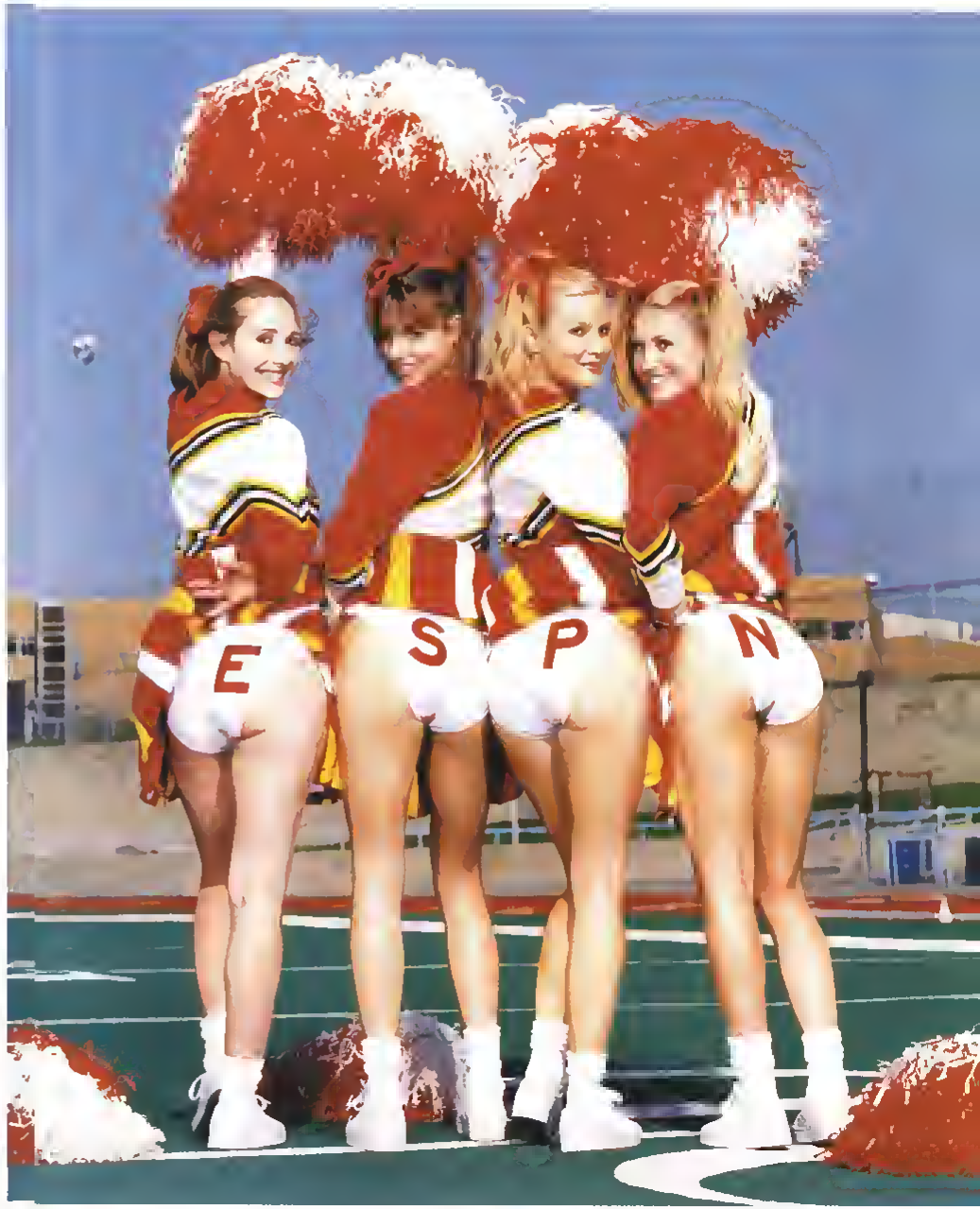
I get asked about bloopers from time to time, and I should have some classic story. We've all made countless mistakes. When other guys make a mistake, I say, "Don't worry, it's on its way to Pluto. It's passing Neptune at this very moment. . . ." [2]

The stakes have never been larger. We're a cash cow for Disney. We're probably worth more than the gross domestic products of some Central American countries. It makes taking that risk a little bit tougher. These days, you see a lot of tight sphincters. Well, you don't see them. But you sense them. [3]

The minute we forget why we were successful in the beginning, we won't look the same. [2]

What is heaven at ESPN? I think that's what it is. Heaven *is* ESPN. Hell? That's when your cable goes out and you can't watch ESPN. [7]

[1] John Walsh, executive vice-president and executive editor; [2] Chris Berman, anchor; [3] Bob Ley, anchor; [4] George Bodenheimer, president, ESPN and ABC Sports; [5] Linda Cohn, anchor; [6] Stuart Scott, anchor; [7] Dan Patrick, anchor



Last Tango in Cleveland

The Battle of the Sexes

ONE NIGHT ONLY!
★ LIVE BOXING ★

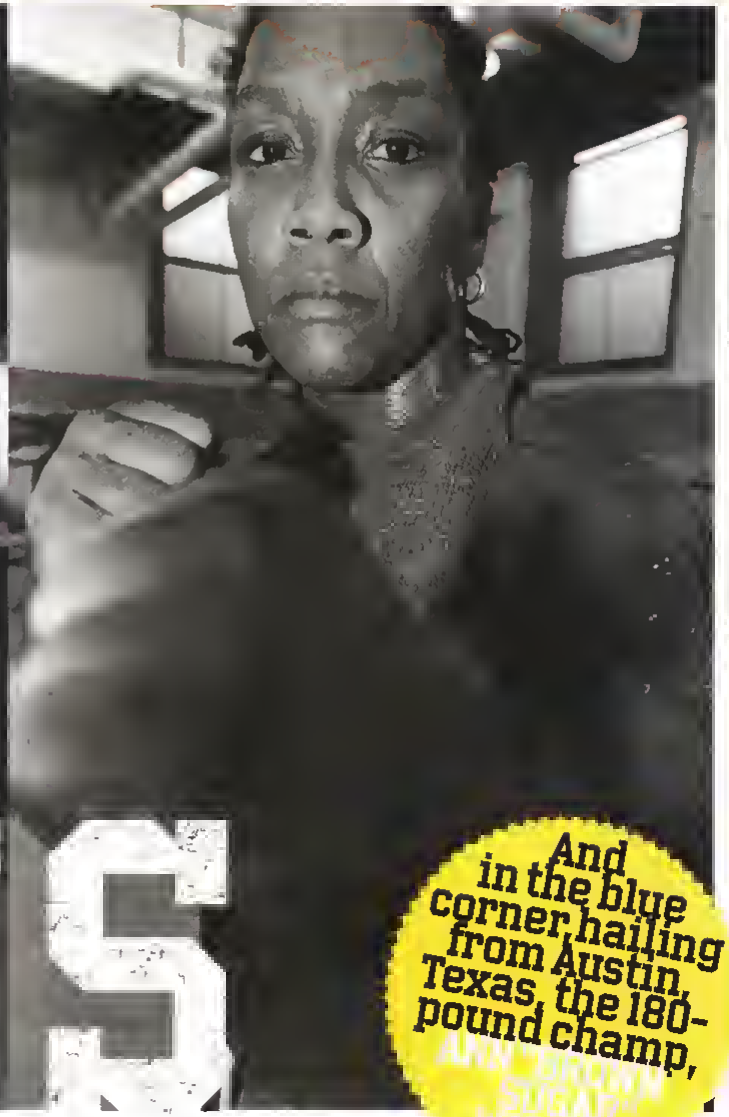
1 MAN

THREE ROUNDS

★ OFFICIAL RINGSIDE PHOTOGRAPHER ★
"Brooklyn" Bruce Davidson



In the red corner, the 255-pound plodder out of Glen Ridge, New Jersey, SCOTT "BOO BOO" RAAB



And in the blue corner, hailing from Austin, Texas, the 180-pound champ, ANN "BROWN SUGAR" WOLFE

★ AN ESQUIRE ★
PRODUCTION

1 WOMAN

"THIS MIGHT BE THE WORST STORY IDEA THAT I'VE EVER HAD."
-RAAB



ANN "BROWN SUGAR" WOLFE lands a left to the author's chin on May 22 in Cleveland. Raab's opponent was supposed to have been Vonda Ward, the female heavyweight champion of the world. But on May 8, during a title bout in Biloxi, Wolfe leveled Ward with an overhand right that knocked her out—out cold—and put Brown Sugar (17–1) on a collision course with the undefeated Raab (0–0).

The guy in the photograph—that potbellied pug who just got knocked cockeyed? *C'est moi,*

as the French featherweight Gus Flaubert used to say, out on a bad first date. Although, as things turned out, I did score a goodnight kiss.

The woman who has just booked me with her left is Ann Wolfe, aka "Brown Sugar," current title holder in four weight classes and the fighter whom Laila Ali, Muhammad's daughter, has been ducking for two years, and for good reason. Wolfe—a thirty-three-year-old ex-con, sweet as peach cobbler till she steps inside the ropes—will whup Ali's butt.

I'm in the ring with Wolfe because . . . well, because I had a dream. Not an actual dream, a pipe dream, a Mitty-meets-Plimpton dream. An out-of-shape, fiftyish guy of considerable strength but no real boxing skill or athletic experience trains a wee bit, steps inside the ropes, and survives three rounds—maybe even holds his own, what the hell, maybe even does some damage—against the best female fighter in the world.

Worst story idea I've ever had.

I start cocky. I'm on a quest, and if you're not in way over your head, it's not truly a quest. So above all, you must believe in the inevitability of your triumph, keep faith firm against all doubt. So I shall. I believe.

Cocky, not crazy. I know, at fifty-one, that I'm not going to become adept. I've been a fight fan all my life. I've been bloodied sitting ringside at the Blue Horizon in Philly; I've watched champs duke it out in Vegas and Mexico City, my oldest boxing memory dates to March 24, 1962, when me and my old man watched on TV as Emile Griffith beat Benny "Kid" Paret into a fatal coma. So I'm aware that boxing—even for a mere three rounds—ain't golf.

Still, I can punch—I've got the heavy hands. Plus, I'm going in there against a woman. What the hell are they doing boxing anyway? Disgraceful.

Some of my disdain comes from having seen the enemy—who's not Ann Wolfe, not yet—in action. Vonda Ward is her name, and though she is herself a handful—a six-six, 180-pound ex–basketball star and the women's heavyweight champion, sporting an 18–0 record with fifteen KOs—she's a robot in the ring, slow of foot and hand, easy to hit. In a TV bout I taped, versus Martha "the Shadow" Salazar, a five-nine, 230-pound fireplug, Ward won the decision but was staggered repeatedly by roundhouse rights to her head. I'm six feet tall, and I plan to go in there at around 250. The way I see it, I've got at least a puncher's chance.

Not that I tell her manager that. My pitch is humble. Vonda's the champ, I'm an old fart writing a story. She's a Cleveland girl, I'm a homey, too. We'll spar three two-minute rounds—big fat gloves, headgear—somewhere in Cleveland, raise some coin for charity, and get Vonda some publicity. We'll aim for February, after I've had time to pick up a few boxing basics. He bites right away.

Then I call Sandy Raab, my old man, out in California.

"I'll be there," he says, chortling.

Next, I book up with a trainer—call him Frankie—a former kickboxer. Frankie runs his own gym. He's maybe forty, long-muscled and ape-knuckled, in baggy shorts and a black tank top, his noggin like a hard-boiled egg with three days' stubble and a sneer where his smile oughta be.

Frankie's even cockier than I am, with little regard for women's boxing in general and zero for Miss Ward, whom he calls "Wanda." His voice, shrill and rising, sounds like he's sporting for a brawl. Frankie doesn't have a chip on his shoulder—he's got Joe Pesci perched up there.

"Here's what happens," Frankie says. "The two of you say, 'Awright, we'll work, but we won't hurt each other.' The bell rings, you and Wanda're movin' around, all of a sudden, *boop!* 'That was a little hard. We weren't supposed to hit that hard.' *Bam!* And the next thing ya know, you two are whalin' away."

Whaling away is good for the story, I tell him. Sure, I've got no athletic background beyond slow-pitch softball, but that doesn't faze me. Or Frankie.

"Since she's a lot taller, I'm gonna have you in a Tyson style, bobbin' underneath, throwin' shots to her body. You're gonna move. A man at 220 pounds punching a woman at 220 pounds—big difference. It's gonna be harder for her than it is for you."

I'm gonna need to drop some tonnage, I say. I'm going about 270 plus tax.

"You get your butt in here three days a week, we won't worry about your diet," Frankie says. "You don't smoke, you don't drink—what's the worst thing you do? A doughnut?"

What about sex? May I drain my fluids? Or will it sap my vitality?

"That ain't true," Frankie assures me. "Ali used to do it right up until. That's all lies."

When Vonda's manager sends along a press kit—her nom de fist is "the All-American Girl," which explains the two-page beauty shot of her stretched on her side, apparently snoozing in the nude, with a large Old Glory arranged so as to sheathe her breasts and hips while leaving bare her muscled thorax—I figure it's time to tell the missus about my project, especially after I inadvertently leave the press kit on the dining-room table.

"Interesting," she says.

Meaning?

"That's all." Lisa's the quiet type.

That's it?

"Yeah."

I don't mention getting permission to have sex. She's heard enough bad news for one day.

Fuck. This. Shit. One week down, and I can barely move my arms. I have to duck my head just to scratch it.

I start with ten push-ups, ten crunches, ten squats, then nine of each, then eight, and so on, down to one. Then Frankie wraps my hands for the bag gloves and I punch, shuffling from heavy bag to heavy bag, for three three-minute rounds. Just to keep my hands raised hurts like hell.

Then he loops an elastic band around a ring post and I grip a handle in each hand and punch the air. Three rounds of this—I'm literally whimpering. I don't know which is worse, the pain in my arms or the little-girlie noises coming out of me.

"Keep punching," Frankie says when I hitch or pause. Prick.

Then three rounds of squats—standing on the floor and sitting down on the ring apron, up and down, up and down. Then three rounds twisting my hips with an eight-foot-long cardboard tube lying across my shoulders, behind the neck, with my feet in the classic boxer's stance—left foot forward, right foot back. Then, to wrap things up, a hundred crunches. When I get home, I take a nap and wake up stiff all over and thank God this is only three days a week.

The spiderweb: Frankie runs ropes from ring post to ring post, shoulder high, I bob underneath, moving side to side. Using the rope line, I also learn to keep my left jab straight as I move forward.

"You're gonna walk her down," Frankie says.

I love the sound of that. Walk her down. *Yeah.* I'm gonna walk her down. I'm *baaad,* baby.

So, Frankie, when do I start sparring for real?

"You ain't ready yet."

Everyone I tell says I'm nuts to do this. Even my neighbor, the Little Architect—this runt wears a *bow tie,* for chrissakes, and thinks Scrabble is a contact sport; he makes Tucker Fucking Carlson look like John Wayne—turns out to be an expert in the sweet science.

"A real pro," he e-mails, "will watch you awhile and then reach in past your guard and put you out just like flipping a switch. It won't even hurt much."

Maybe I *am* nuts. But at my age, a stupid quest is better than no quest at all.

"Getcher fat ass on the bike."

This pisses me off. I don't need Joe Pesci's loser brother bully-ragging me. One month into this and I'm coming in early for a half hour on the stationary bike. My ass *is* fat, I haven't dropped an ounce. That's how come I'm here early.

Do I get on the bike? Do I go home? These workouts are primitive, pointless, redundant—I'm *still* not sparring. My appetite for physical labor is quite limited. A long learning curve offends my dignity. I prefer to overcome adversity with thunder and drama, wow the fans, and get home by dinnertime. Maybe I'm just not quest material.

But I get on the bike, thinking about a guy I saw get off the train this morning: cheap black suit, scuffed brogans, thirty-ish, and twisted by one of nature's cheap tricks into the kind of creature—one side of him locked a half foot higher than the



RAAB AND HIS CORNERMEN—pro welterweight Rahnique "Pulverizer" Posey (left) and trainer Bob Jackson—at Gleason's Gym in Brooklyn. Says Bob, "Scott's a writer, not a fighter."

other, one leg dented inward at the knee—that inspired my Gram to mutter prayers on the street. The Penn Station escalator was, as always, running the wrong way, so he had to pull himself up the stairs, one hand clenching his briefcase, the other in a death grip on the iron railing, climbing step by step and inch by inch.

Sure, it's a cliché. There but for the grace of God go I. The crooked guy can't just be a man, he's a handy metaphor. I'm a writer. I know about cliché and metaphor, about the practice of detachment, keeping a barrier up between what I feel and what I'm writing. This is only a story I'm working on—just another story. What's at stake? To prove that women can't fight, and that I can? Is that it? If that's all there is to it, why even call it a quest? Why get on the bike? Why *not* head home?

But the crooked guy is no cliché, no metaphor. He's a man on a true quest: to climb those goddamn steps.

Finally. We go two rounds, Frankie and me. I can't lay a glove on him. I gas myself just trying, cooked completely thirty seconds in. Frankie pops me at will, high and low, flicking jabs and a body shot or two. At the bell, I stretch out flat in the corner of the ring, gasping. The second round, more of the same.

Yet somehow I feel exhilarated afterward. I feel *great*. In the shower, I blow a gout of blood out of my left nostril and veritably swell with pride. I got hit, but I kept coming. Okay, to no avail whatsoever—my hands are slow, my feet are sludge, my reflexes are torpid, my wind is nil; there's far more than twenty pounds between me and quick—but I never backed down.

I can do this thing. I just need to learn to breathe in there, to pace myself. Incredible how different it feels when the bell goes off and somebody else is across the ring; I was literally holding my breath.

I *can* do this thing. I just need to learn to see with the headgear on and to move my head out of harm's way without losing my balance.

Four weeks to go. I just need more sparring.

But I can *do* this thing.

I believe.

Hoo boy, the sound of a Jew in a stew of his own making. Hoo boy.

Vonda's manager calls to say that they've signed to fight Ann Wolfe for the vacant light-heavyweight crown, May 8, in Biloxi, Mississippi. Vonda can't risk an injury, so we're postponed.

Which gives me more time to train. Which, frankly, sucks. I'm beginning to see what it takes to be even a mediocre boxer—a relentless regimen, a brute's indifference to abuse, a monk's taste for denial—and what it costs: pain.

Take my pinkie fingers, for instance, both of them blistered bloody at the second knuckle. It hurts too much to hit, and hitting opens the scabs right up again when I try banging the bag. Either Frankie's miswrapping my hands, or I'm not punching square. So instead of actual sparring, I'm trading air jabs, trying to learn to catch and misdirect incoming punches. And I'm skipping around the ring, trying to build stamina. Big fun. I trudge into Frankie's, mumble, "How ya doin'?" and he says, "Just another day in paradise, pal—just one more day in paradise."

I'd gladly climb through the ropes tomorrow and take a beating if need be, just to get this whole thing over with.

Ten *more* weeks? Please kill me now.

We've got the date—May 22. We've got the venue—a Boy's Club–type place in downtown Cleveland. I took a week off from training, went to Cleveland, and met with Vonda to nail the whole schmear down.

She's *tall*. Christ, is she tall. Spars with men every day, she says. Went through two male sparring partners just last week, she says—broke one's nose with an uppercut and hit the other with a liver shot that brought him to his knees. Works out six hours a day, six days a week, she says—and she looks it, all sinewy and shit. Big veins up and down her mile-long arms. I have one visible vein myself, on the underside of my cock.

As soon as I get back to Jersey, I throw in the video of Vonda fighting the fat lady who kept landing haymakers on her nose. It makes me feel better. Although I swear Vonda looks quicker on the tape than I remember. It's all starting to feel like a dream—not a good dream.

Do I still believe? Yeah—I believe I could be in a world of trouble.

I tell Lisa it's not a good idea for her to come to Cleveland for the fight.

"But I should be there—you know, to pick up the pieces."

Honey, I say, if there are pieces, we're all in big trouble. Just stay here with the kid.

"Yer gonna get kilt in there."

This is Frankie's way of telling me that I'm not keeping my right hand up on defense. We have eight weeks left to get me ready—I've started to come in four days a week—and I sense that he's beginning to grasp reality: I'm short on skill, stamina, and ring savvy.

He doesn't say that. What he says is, "We might need to fake an injury. To buy more time."

I can't do that, Frankie.

"Why not? It happens all the time in the boxing business."

I'm not in the boxing business, I'm in the magazine business. We have deadlines. Besides, I don't want more time. I want to get this over with.

"It's yer call. But yer gonna get kilt in there."

Which I suppose makes it unanimous.

Manhood is a funny thing. In my late teens and early twenties, I didn't get in many fights; instead, I carried a small gun. I fancied myself a tough guy, but the beefs I did get into were one-punch barroom bouts, and since I was largish, strong, and held my liquor well back then, I did fine. I did get beat down at Comiskey Park in '76, but that involved three dudes and plenty of beer, no pain, no fear, even while getting kicked in the ribs.

Now—now that manhood means providing for my wife and son, delivering the goods to my editors, standing up for the values I've come to cherish, all that righteous crapola—*now* I'm training for a fistfight? With a pro?

Hoo boy.

I'm quits with Frankie. I don't know whether he was trying to emphasize his point about my lack of defense or get me hurt for real—or maybe he's just plain incompetent—but after three weeks of no sparring, he puts me in there with a guy who's been working with him for five years.

"Just left jabs," Frankie warns. "Don't let me see you guys throwing anything else or I'll stop it right away."

Toward the end of the first, I take one flush on the mouth and nose. Just a jab—a very sharp jab—but my fat head is coming forward as it lands. Stunned, I keep going—I don't know what else to do—and he keeps coming, throwing hard.

Frankie doesn't move a muscle. Me, I turn and duck.

"You can't do that," Frankie shouts.

The fuck I can't, I say. I'm through with you. I'm done with the fight business.

"I hate seeing you like this," Lisa says.

Yeah, yeah. Where's the aspirin?

I'm moping and I'm stuck. Truth is, I'm ashamed. It's humbling, getting clocked that way—struck dumb, scared, and defenseless. My mouth is cut inside my upper lip, where it slammed against the mouth guard, and I have a slight headache. But what's really hurting is my pride.

I'm no fighter. I don't *ever* want to get belted that way again. It isn't my cut gum that shames me so; it's the cowardice I felt in the ring. Part of that was ignorance—not knowing how to clinch or cover up—but the helplessness and fear is a combination I've never felt before.

And yet I don't want shame to be all I carry away from this. Screw the quest. What can I live with and still feel like a man? That's what's at stake now. Plus, of course, my nose. And liver.

I call Cal Fussman, another Esquire writer and an old pal. Last century, Cal went one round with the great Julio Cesar Chavez and wrote a fine story. Cal understands; he tells me I should call Teddy Atlas, famous ex-trainer and all-around fight maven.

"I know Vonda Ward a little bit," Teddy rasps. "Tough girl. Can't spell *dumb*, but very game. Can you get an extension?"

Nope.

"Awright, I've got a friend I'll call—Bob Jackson. He used to run the Gramercy Gym with Al Gavin. He works out of Gleason's now."

Gleason's Gym has been in Brooklyn for the last twenty years, but it opened in the Bronx in 1937. A hundred champions and more—Ali, Tyson, La Motta, and poor dead Benny "Kid" Paret among them—trained at Gleason's. Which naturally leads me to the question, What business have I here?

Three days ago, I caught one punch and fled Frankie's. I'm no fighter, I'm a poseur, a tourist, a drama queen. Bob Jackson training *me*? Get bent. Bob Jackson has trained champions.

But you can't go up the concrete stairs and through the steel door of Gleason's and not feel like a fighter. Here, 1937 never ended. This is a screeching, pounding furnace of pain—filthy, dim, and roaring. The ceiling and walls are hung with

posters and bags—speed bags, double-end bags uppercut and hook bags. A pay phone on a post jangles endlessly while inside the four rings men—and women—spar or shadowbox. The place is mythic, glorious. Even that scent, many fathoms deeper than sweat. It smells like the bottom of a pot of chili that's been simmering twenty years.

The farther back you walk into the chiaroscuro, the sweeter the stink, until at last you're at a doorway in back. No name on it, just a hand-lettered sign: SCALE IS BROKEN. Bob Jackson's office.

He's spooning rigatoni from a foil dish on a battered desk, a big man in a metal folding chair, wearing a red satin Everlast trainer's jacket. He's got stout forearms coming out of the short sleeves, a wave of silver hair, a matching mustache on his ruddy puss. Kind eyes. You might say that Bob's blue eyes are fatherly—that is, if your pop had put in thirty-five years as a guard at Sing Sing, the day job Bob retired from.

He hears me out—the whole sorry saga—then he asks me to show him some footwork. His pipefitter's arms are crossed, but I get the slightest nod.

"Not too bad," Bob says. "So you learned *somethin'*. Look, I ain't here to piss all over yer dreams. We've got five weeks, and that's enough to teach you how to look like a real fighter in there. But—*BUT!*"—Bob's foghorn goes from bark to roar faster than anyone I've ever met—"don't think fer one second that yer going in there to walk this broad down or any of that shit. You go home, you call her up, you tell her, 'Honey, please—yer gonna have to work with me in there.' Do *not* make her mad. She's a professional fighter."

So you'll train me?

"Of course I'll train you. But—*BUT!*—you've gotta *work*."

How many days a week?

"*How many?* *FIVE!*' And I'll tell ya somethin' else: Cherish every second yer in here and in that ring. For a guy like you, this should be fun and games. You've got a choice, a house, a good job. For most of these kids, this is as good as it gets their whole life."

Home from Gleason's, I come through the door yelling—I'm back, baby. I'm *back*! It's on!

"Great," Lisa says, grinning almost like she means it.

I don't call Vonda Ward—not yet. I've got five weeks to give this all I've got.

I'm in the ring, shadowboxing. Bob's watching me from a chair below the corner. I keep looking down to make sure my steps are correct—"walking the box," Bob calls it—and each time I glance down, I slow down. And when I slow down, he roars, 'WHADDYA LOOKIN' AT YER FEET?" Then, "STOP LOOKIN' AT YER FUCKIN' FEET!" And then, "WHAT THE FUCK'S WRONG WITH YOU? YOU GOT A HEARING PROBLEM? STOP LOOKIN' AT YER. FUCKIN' FEET."

I lean over to him when the bell sounds, and he mists me with water from a red plastic spray bottle. On a humid day in a hot gym where the skank is rising from dozens of fighters, this is blissful refreshment.

"Lissen," Bob growls, "if you keep lookin' down at the floor when you're in there with her, yer gonna get a real close-up view. Just trust yourself. Repetition. Repetition and absorption."

I nod, but when the bell sounds, Bob spots me looking down. At the end of the round, he spritzes me again and motions me out of the ring.

"Show some respect for yourself," he says. "Clear off a little spot there on the apron."

I rub away a semicircle of grime and grit and hair.

"Now put your head down on there and look at me."

I lay my cheek atop the canvas, gazing sideways up at him.

"I had a fighter get knocked down once," Bob says, 'and he's lookin' over at me just like you are now. 'STAY DOWN TILL EIGHT,' I tell him. 'Okay,' he says to me—'what time is it now?'"

We laugh and laugh. "Go get yer bag gloves on and do three rounds," he says. "Then fifteen minutes on the treadmill."

Bob's scale is ancient, but it works just fine, the sign on his door is there to keep other trainers' fighters out of his office. His own seminarians, guys I see now every day, include ranked vets and up-and-comers, kids just turning pro, Golden Gloverş, plus a few high schoolers seeking a skill that won't land them in stir, and a couple of diddling geezers like me.

Well, me and one other diddler almost my age—Tony. He looks like a pirate—wiry, long-haired, little beard, about five-ten, 170. I can tell he's been boxing awhile from the way he blurs the speed bag. Just the fact that Tony can work the speed bag at all puts him way ahead of me.

"Tony's a musician," Bob says, by way of introducing us. Cool. Whaddya play?

"Bass," Tony says.

"Don't be modest," Bob says. "Tell 'im who you play with."

"Dylan," Tony says.

That's Gleason's, too. Hilary Swank works out most days, she has great legs and fast hands. One electric morning: Ali himself shows up for a photo shoot, slow, bent, bobbing in a sea of love and awe.

Some days I come at 11:00 A.M. and stay till after six. I can sit for hours listening to Bob talk about boxing—or the death house up the river. He screams at all of his fighters, but before they go home, they lean over Bob's chair, hug his ox neck, and peck him on the cheek to say goodbye.

"Okay, babe—safe travel," Bob says to one and all.

I'm guessing he's the only white man many of them have ever kissed.

What a fighter does: He shows up every day. He listens to his trainer. He watches what he eats. He studies what his betters do and learns from them.

"Be a parrot," Bob tells me. "Move. Weave. Feint. Loosen up—*bullshit* a little. Fool me. You're a plodder. There's nuthin' wrong with that. But you gotta *work* in there."

A fighter learns to wrap his own hands. He doesn't whine. He doesn't complain. He doesn't whimper, make pouty faces, or let his opponent know he's tired or hurt.

"No drama," Bob is fond of telling me when my effort flags. "No despair. No fatigue. And *don't* settle for incompetence."

A fighter spars. I go two rounds with a sixty-seven-year-old rock-hard former pro named Bob Matthews. He crowds me, covering up, not throwing much. I don't know what to do. I push him off me. Bob Jackson screams, "DON'T PUSH! PUNCH OUT OR GET AWAY!"

I throw a couple of halfhearted punches. I can't hit anything but his arms, and when he starts to throw—my chin ain't hard to find—I push him again. "HEY!" Bob shouts. "STOP FUCKIN' PUSHIN'!"

The second round, likewise. I'm supposed to punch, I don't want to punch. I don't want to be in there with a sixty-seven-year-old man. I don't want to be in there with a woman. I don't want to be in there at all. I'm afraid.

But afterward, I'm happy, too, and proud. I climbed back into the ring and put 'em up. I finally feel entitled to give Bob a goodbye kiss.

"Okay, babe," he says. "Safe travel."

Oh, yeah. Glen Ridge, New Jersey. Mean streets.

Three weeks to go

Yesterday, I went two rounds with a young pro named Kenny, a silky welterweight. He didn't bother throwing punches. All he did was slip and grin.

This afternoon when I come in, Bob's at his desk, glum as mud. Kenny went to court early this morning. For sentencing. He got three to five; he's already gone.

"You know what made me proud?" Bob says. 'Elvis and Rohnique"—two more of Bob's young fighters—"showed up in court just for support. I told him, 'You're a strong kid now, Kenny. You do your time and get back here. We'll be here for you.'"

Cherish every second. Best advice anyone ever gave or got.

Do I laugh or cry? I get beat up by Bob Dylan's bass player. I land a few, but mostly I get hit in the face.

"MOVE YER FUCKIN' HEAD!" Bob hollers. "BEND YOUR FUCKIN' KNEES! WEAVE! DO SOMETHIN'! MOVE. YOU FIGHT LIKE A HILLBILLY! FER CHRISSAKES—BEND YOUR FUCKIN' KNEES!"

It's really kind of funny, to be getting hit in the head because I'm turning to listen to Bob screaming at me about getting hit in the head. The good news is that I'm more used to getting hit in the head. But it hurts. My nose aches, my forehead's sore and my pride—yep, I've rebuilt some of that at Gleason's and dropped a few pounds, too—is wounded.

I'm on a bench at the subway station thinking how I have two reactions to getting hit—I want to run and hide or if flight is impossible, to talk things out with my assailant—when Tony walks up to say hey.

You're tough, I tell him.

'You know what?" he says. "When you're coming forward, I can't do a thing."

I mull this over on the train home. Not that it requires much mulling.

"Should I be more aggressive in there?" I ask Bob next day.

"A touch," he says. I actually can't [*continued on page 222*]



The beautiful, sledge-fisted sistah—thirty-three years old, mother of two, a tattooed ex-con, a sharecropper's daughter—practically made me her bee-yotch.

*USE NO 2 PENCIL ONLY *EXAMPLE ● *ERASE COMPLETELY TO CHANGE

The Esquire Quiz:

What's Your Sexual IQ?

Do you know your Astroglide from your exhibitionism? Take this quiz from Esquire's Institute of Copulative Studies to find out whether you're a sex genius or a sex simpleton

BY STACEY GRENROCK WOODS

1 The sperm and egg usually meet . . .
- A in the vagina.
- B in the uterus.
- C in the fallopian tubes.
- D at the Outback Steakhouse.

2 Bill Maher has a $50 bill. He gets change from Fred Durst and tips the valet at the Playboy mansion $5. He then buys condoms for $3.95. Does he have enough money left to pay for the average lap dance?

3 The g-spot . . .
- A is on the right wall of the vagina.
- B is near the anterior wall of the vagina.
- C is rectum-adjacent.
- D switches sides when you cross the equator.

4 True or false: Crabs can be cured with over-the-counter medication.

6 Which three of the following are not common flavors for lubricant?
- A Tropical fruit
- B Carob
- C Piña colada
- D Black cherry
- E Loganberry
- F Dill

7 The average American woman can expect to hit menopause . . .
- A at 46.
- B at 51.
- C at 56.
- D while watching *The Banger Sisters*.

8 There are a hundred men watching a bass-fishing tournament. How many will have a lower-hanging left testicle?
- A 15
- B 25
- C 50
- D 85

9



Some guy rubbing up against you on the subway for sexual gratification is most likely . . .
- A an exhibitionist.
- B a frotteur.
- C a voyeur.
- D a foreigner.
- E Moby

10 What logically comes next in this series? Excitement, plateau, orgasm . . .
- A resolution.
- B refraction.
- C regret.
- D Riunite on Ice.

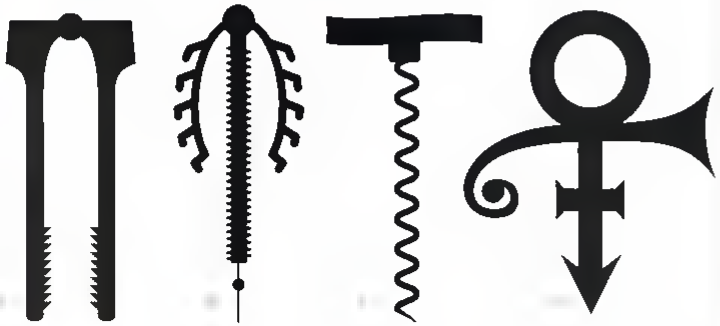
11 If all dildos are sex toys, and soma sex toys vibrate, then are all vibrators dildos?

12 The merry widow and the tanga are . . .
- A aphrodisiacs.
- B dildos.
- C lingerie.
- D characters in *Kill Bill Vol. 2*.

13 Bob Dole is to Viagra as Bob Dylan is to . . .
- A Victoria's Secret.
- B hormone replacement.
- C Levitra.

5

Which of the following images is an IUD?



14



Please identify the sexual position pictured above.
- A Scissors
- B Seventh Posture of the Perfumed Garden
- C The Wasp
- D Pinking Shears
- E The Reverse Cowgirl

15 Freud called the period before boys and girls become interested in the opposite sex . . .
- A the latency period.
- B the dormancy period.
- C the inert interlude.
- D the wonder years.

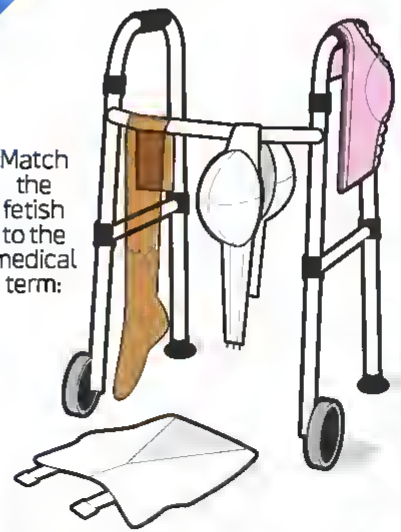
16 Rearrange these letters to spell an unreliable form of birth control: GUHDIOCN

18 The opening at the head of your penis is called . . .
- A the urethra.
- B the Cowper's gland.
- C the meatus.
- D the opening.

19 Identify the correct spelling.
- A Jenna Jamison
- B Jenna Jameson
- C Jenna Jamisson
- D Jenna Jamessen

17

Match the fetish to the medical term:



- A Sexual attraction to wood
- B Sexual attraction to stuffed toys
- C Sexual attraction to the aged
- D Sexual arousal from enemas

1 gerontophilia
2 xylophilia
3 plushophilia
4 klismaphilia

20 Paris has six kinds of lube. Three of them are silicone based, one contains oil, one is a water-based glycerin, and one is just plain old Vaseline. How many of them can she safely use with a latex condom?

21 True or false: It is legal for two women to have sex in Michigan.

22 The gay-liberation movement is generally considered to have started . . .
- A in New York in 1969.
- B in Paris in the twenties.
- C in San Francisco in 1980.
- D on Bravo last year.

23 The best position for getting pregnant is . . .
- A the missionary position.
- B doggie style.
- C kitty style.
- D the Seventh Posture of the Perfumed Garden.

24 Match the characters in these typical sexual role-playing scenarios.
- A nurse
- B boss
- C master
- D teacher
- E knight
- F David Geffen

1 dog
2 student
3 patient
4 Keanu Reeves
5 damsel
6 secretary

25 Amber, Brandi, and Tanya are all older than sixteen but younger than eighteen. How many can R. Kelly legally sleep with in . . .
- Hawaii ___
- New York ___
- California ___

26 Which of these doesn't belong?
- A Bunny Ranch resident
- B Call girl
- C Gigolo
- D Painted lady

27 True or false: Sperm makes up about 1 percent of ejaculate.

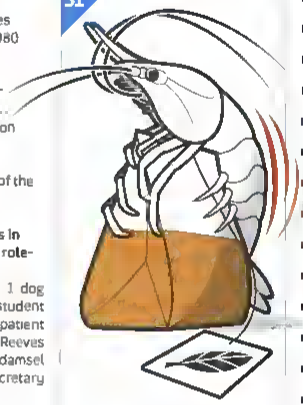
28 Which two of the following are not signs of sexual excitement in women?
- A Erect nipples
- B Swollen clitoris
- C Increased saliva
- D Vasocongestion
- E Glancing at watch

29 Which of the following is not the name of a dildo?
- A Throbbing Thruster
- B Ruby Rapture
- C Extra Long Double Dong
- D Jolly Joystick

30 Match the first and last names of these groundbreaking sex researchers:
- A Virginia
- B Alfred
- C William
- D Shere

1 Masters
2 Johnson
3 Kinsey
4 Hite

31



Shrimping is to *toe* as *tea-bagging* is to . . .
- A finger
- B scrotum.
- C Celestial Seasonings Orange Zinger.
- D nipple

ANSWERS

Multiply the number of correct answers by 5 to get your official Sexual IQ.

KEY

Less than 80 points You know less about sex than Horatio Sanz.

80 to 120 Well, look who's average.

More than 120 Colin Farrell? Is that you?

ILLUSTRATIONS BY MICK BILLO

FIELD TRIP

The fitted silhouettes and uptown feel of fall's finest suits and coats will have you looking razor sharp in the boardroom, even when your commute to the office takes a slight detour »

Photographs by GREG MILLER



Three-button wool suit ($2,295), cotton shirt ($425), and silk tie ($105) by Giorgio Armani; leather shoes ($595) by J. M. Weston; leather briefcase ($780) by Salvatore Ferragamo.







8:33 A.M.

Camel-hair coat ($395), two-button wool jacket ($495), cotton shirt ($125), silk tie ($40), and wool trousers ($225) by DKNY umbrella ($195) by Burberry London



8:36 A.M.

wool coat ($1,125), three-button wool suit ($2,195), cotton shirt ($42[illegible] silk tie ($105), a[illegible] leather[illegible] by Do[illegible] &



8:59 A.M.

Three-button wool suit ($1,370), cotton shirt ($250), and wool tie ($63) by Helmut Lang, leather shoes ($420) by Salvatore Ferragamo; umbrella ($95) by Giorgio Armani

8:45 A.M.

Double-breasted cashmere coat ($2,[illegible]), [illegible]-button wool suit ($1,360), cotton shirt ($[illegible]), and leather gloves ($162) by Calvin Klein Collection; silk tie ($[illegible]) by [illegible] Class by Robert Talbott; leather shoes ($[illegible]) by Tod's

Living in the wilderness for months at a time, hauling cargo to far-flung outposts, Patrick Brown has been attacked, bitten, stampeded, and has run for his life. But when it's your ass on the line, you better hope it's him coming for you.

the hard way

By Christopher McDougall



Photograph by BRYCE DUFFY

ILLUSTRATION BY OLIVIER KUGLER



AS A DEEP-WOODS PACKER in Idaho's badass River of No Return—the largest wilderness forest in the lower forty-eight—Patrick is a last vestige of a storied profession, one with its own code of manhood and self-sufficiency. "I'm not saying Let's make life harder for the sake of making it harder. I'm saying, Let's see how much we can do before we start looking for shortcuts. Let's test our limits before we surrender."

Damn spirited of Walt to join the manhunt, but maybe he ought to stick to flying the plane. We're buzzing way too tight over the mountains for him to keep squirming around like that, jabbing his finger at the pines nearly brushing the belly of our dented four-seat Cessna. ¶ "He might be right under us," he says. ¶ "*What?*" I have to yell, though I'm afraid he'll swivel to talk. ¶ He does. "*He might be right under us!*" Walt shouts, yanking off his headphones. "He can turn up anywhere!" We're flying over the River of No Return, the biggest and baddest wilderness forest in the lower forty-eight states, more than two million acres of pine-snarled, canyon-creased Idaho backcountry famous for mountain lions, moose, and misfits. ¶ And somewhere down there is the Packer. ¶ "*There's where you're going!*" hollers Walt, circling what looks like the delivery entrance to a moonshine still but turns out to be our dirt landing strip. We're now farther from a paved road than anywhere else in the U.S. that's not Alaska. No vehicles besides bush planes are allowed; by Forest Service rules, the last permissible machinery was introduced by Sacajawea. True wilderness, though, means you can hunt and camp wherever you please, wandering as naked as Loincloth Man, who spent last summer sleeping under a bush and hunting bear while equipped with only bow, arrow, and namesake nutsack.

No machines also means the Packer and his mules are the only way to get anything bigger than a backpack into the backcountry. The Packer is a young guy but a pure throwback to the days when Merrill's Marauders were mule-packing ammo behind enemy lines in Burma and Hard Rock Elliott was keeping mountain folk alive by giddyupping food through hungry wolves and blizzards. That's why nowadays, crusty old hunters will stop and stare when the Packer passes on a backwoods trail. They'll take a good long look at those diamond knots on his expertly engineered loads and the hand-rolled smoke in his scruffy jaw and flash back to a time when old Billy Bell could parade his pack string through a fairground and get a standing ovation. Just like him, the Packer can shoe his mules, stitch their cuts, navigate by night, rip trees with a crosscut, catch wild grouse with his bare hands, and find the only survivable path out of a canyon-wide blaze.

"Does he know you're coming?" Walt shouts.

"Yeah! I sent a note in by mail plane!"

"Oh....."

What he means is "Oh, shit." Spring squalls, Walt now tells me, have grounded the weekly mail planes for nearly a month; chances are, my note is on the plane with me now, alongside the slice of birthday blackberry pie from the Packer's girlfriend.

Walt brings us in fast, then smokes the brakes before we hit the hill. From the airstrip, we can see the entire meadow. No Packer. Walt is reluctant to go. With no phones out here and no radio, I'm cut off till he comes back for me in ten days.

Walt aventually growls up and off, and I shoulder my pack and hike a few miles down an old Shoshone trail. Nothing. When I scramble a few hundred feet up a hill, I've got a clear shot for an extra mile in every direction. Still nothing.

The sun is dropping behind the mountains by the time I get back to the ranger's post, an ancient log hut by the creek, and digest the fact that I may be fucked. Tracking down the Packer, I'm starting to realize, will be impossible. Just look at this wilderness. The sun isn't even down and deep shadows are already turning the woods impenetrable and Amazonian.

Then one of the shadows separates and comes toward me.

"I was wondering who left that big footprint on the trail," a voice says.

No need to find the Packer. The Packer, it seems, has found me.

"You were damn lucky," he says. Yeah, but that cuts both ways. The plane brought food and the first beer he has seen in too long, so while he's sizzling dinner over a propane burner, he explains that he was supposed to have packed a trail crew into the woods a few days ago. Rain held them up, or else he'd be long gone and not back till ... who knows? As a deep-woods packer for the U.S. Forest Service, he typically roams the woods like a gypsy cab, climbing to high ground every few days or so to check in with HQ by walkie-talkie and find out where he's needed next. In the same week, he might play trashman, delivery boy, and civil engineer, hauling bags of rubbish out to the trailhead, delivering groceries to ranger stations, and developing a tandem-load system to move a thousand pounds of iron by mule down a near-vertical trail.

He pokes a still-raw knockwurst hopefully. Since he's lived the last few days on instant potatoes, his belt is yanked a few notches tighter. Not that he can't live off the land, his best feasts have come from the forest. When he finds a freshly killed elk, he'll quickly chop off a chunk before the bear or mountain lion returns, then dine on tenderloin, huckleberries, and dandelion salad.

But when you're racing a pack string through the mountains in the middle of a forest fire, you can't stop and pluck salad greens. That's something even some Forest Service rangers don't understand; the Packer isn't some spear-whittling Modern Woodsman or one of those glass-blowing actors in a living-history park. He's working a real job, facing real cougars and rattlers, with real lives at stake if he fucks up. Fire watchers don't eat until the Packer fights his way to their stations, and smoke jumpers can't hit the next fire line till he hustles their equipment down from the hills. He'll go weeks, sometimes a month without seeing anyone, arriving at an outpost after the rangers are asleep and departing before dawn, hearing no news from home or the outside world, sleeping in rain and snow and loneliness.

"Sometimes I'm walking along, holding a piss-soaked rope, got horse shit in my teeth, and I wonder what the fuck I'm doing out here," he says. "People always tell me, *'I want your job! I'd love to ride around on a horse all day!'* " He pauses to prong one of the half-cooked wursts. "They have *no* fucking idea."

Before he took the job that became his obsession, the Packer was just Patrick Brown, art student and weekend backpacker from Atlanta. He'll be thirty-two in a few days but shares Johnny Depp's knack for simultaneously appearing a decade younger and three lifetimes older by framing his teen-dream face in vintage scruffiness. Beneath the retro muttonchops, the Jed Clampett whiskers, and the tattered Sherpa cap, beneath the mule-scented T-shirt and grimy green Carhartts he won't change for a month, you still can't miss the gypsy-child good looks Patrick inherited from his mom, the former Miss Gwinnett County of Georgia. When he lifts his face to fire up a smoke, he resembles a Walker Evans sharecropper, a hatchet-hewn profile of bottomless eyes and startling smile.

"He cuts a very romantic figure, riding up on his horse, all tall and thin with that little Southern drawl," I'd heard from Jeanine D'Antonio, a Canadian national-park ranger who knows how to size 'em up, she'd seen plenty of backwoods he-men before marrying a River of No Return ranger herself. "You can tell right away he's sensitive. He thinks questions out and has that attention to detail women love. But good Lord!" she interjects, adding a warning she knows will only make him all the more attractive to all the wrong women. "He'd be a *hell* of a person to date."

It takes a certain kind of man to spend weeks alone in the woods, leading a string of notoriously willful mules over terrain so terrible that seasoned smoke jumpers will insist on a chopper rather than walk it. Talk to guys who truly know the Old West and they'll tell you the *real* tough hombres weren't the cowboys, who did all that rootin' 'n' tootin' just to shove a bunch of dumb cows around, but the packers, who had to master the cleverest creature on hooves and move silently through the night with no pistols, no

PHOTOGRAPH BY BRYCE GUFFY

companionship, no excuses. It makes a guy half hermit, that extreme self-reliance, and more loyal to his mules than to men.

Squeezing stories out of Patrick ain't easy. Packers aren't used to talking about themselves, because they're not much used to talking. Living inside your own head is both a qualification and a consequence of the job. Maybe he'll tell you what happened to his dad when he was two. Most likely not. Not right away at least. But prod him enough—and feed him a Fat Tire ale—and maybe he'll tell you about the twelve students who wouldn't have made it out of the woods without a packer to help them.

About two years after he had finished his apprenticeship and become a full packer, the most ferocious fire in fifty years began sweeping the River of No Return. Patrick had just cargoed a dozen college kids in-country a few days before, and he quickly saddled up, figuring he could get them before a chopper could arrive the next morning. He sped twelve miles through the dark, arriving to find the students freaked out by the approaching glow. Patrick got them all to a ranger station by dawn, then turned around and headed back in—for their gear.

He got within a quarter mile of their camp before the fire blew up on him. He could hear the fire watchers screaming over the radio for him to get out, but he had no time to answer. He sprinted up the switchbacks, leading the pack string, while the flames roared up the hill beside him and the mules. When fire cut them off, Patrick just ran them on through. "All I was thinking about was getting the animals the hell out of there," he says.

He finally arrived at the ranger station that night, to news that everyone was being evacuated by plane. Everyone, that is, except him. He hadn't slept in two nights and had a fire-singed face and smoke-ravaged throat, but he still had to lead his mules thirty miles through the dark over the ridge to Big Creek.

I don't get it. "Was their stuff really valuable?" I ask. "Why would you go back for it?"

Patrick takes a few slow chews of knockwurst before answering. "I'd never been in anything like that before," he says. "So I thought I could do it."

It's late, so I'm not going to argue, but his answer doesn't make much sense to me. It would take another week, and a very long night with wolves, before I finally got what he meant.

The instant they hear Patrick unzipping his frost-covered tent the next morning, Johnny Rotten, Henry, and the three other mules come clomping straight for him. There are cots in the ranger's hut, but a packer sleeps on the ground, close to his animals, one ear tuned to the coppery clong of their neck bells. On the trail, Patrick won't even bring a tent; he'll just roll up in two sweaty pack canvases he yanks from the mules' backs.

Patrick gives the mules good-morning noogies and strolls over to where I'm camped. The trail crew is due this morning on a bush plane, which really bugs him. Given a chance, he'd rip up the airstrips and make the whole wilderness packer-access only. He cuts me off before I can bring up the hypocrisy of hating planes but welcoming airborne knockwurst, arguing he'd rather make the twenty-hour hike for food if it would eliminate all planes. "I'm not saying, Let's make life harder for the sake of making it harder. I'm saying, Let's see how much we can do before we start looking for shortcuts. Let's test our limits before we surrender."

I, meanwhile, am crawling out of my weatherproof Coleman one-man with the special rain guard and inflatable Therm-a-Rest sleeping pad, looking for filtered water to fill my portable Bialetti espresso maker. I'm down with what he's saying, as long as my limits don't get tested before my quick-jet camp stove has finished perking the Cuban-roast Pilon.

It's breathtaking out here, and not just because of the icy air. Spray is sparkling over the wide white water of Big Creek, and the pine-covered hills are just emerging through the vanishing mist. The River of No Return has the kind of dawn-of-creation landscape in which you constantly expect to see bighorn sheep poised beneath a soaring eagle, and probably will.

By midmorning, the four-person trail crew has arrived. They dump their backpacks cheerfully—*very* cheerfully, since they can now make the ten-mile hike with just day packs and tools—and head down the trail. They're on a ten-day hitch in the backcountry to rebuild washed-out trails, so they've loaded their bags with enough food and gear to see them through rain, snow, and baking sun. Patrick pulls out a hanging scale and hoists a pack that looks the size of a twin bed. It's more than eighty pounds. "Ow!" he winces. "She must have known I'd be here."

It takes him nearly an hour to sort the bags by size, ripping some of them apart to repack for an equal division of weight. It's a point of pride among packers to occasionally offend the owners of the cargo they're hauling; Patrick once made a trail crew unpack their bear-proof, two-hundred-pound food drums, and then took a sledgehammer and smashed them down to mule-friendly size.

Once he's got the cargo sorted, he starts binding it up in canvas "manties," an Old West mangling of the Spanish word for blanket, inherited from the proto-packing conquistadors. "Now, look at this," Patrick is saying, plucking a rope against Johnny Rotten's flank so it snaps back with a *thwop*. "This is the rarest of the rare. You should be able to tie it in ninety seconds and play music on it." What he's just lashed together is the fabled diamond hitch, that Masonic handshake of a knot that somehow loops, twists, and cinches manila rope into a diamond shape across the top and pulls with equal force in four directions.

"Amazing how many people out here can't tie a diamond, or won't even try to learn," he says, moving Johnny along with a swat and getting to work on Henry. "It's a good feeling to have your packs all tight and neat with a few diamonds and have a hunting outfitter stop and go, 'Nice pack.'"

Then he's rolling a last smoke for the trail, and we're off. He walks point, keeping an eye out for Western rattlers, which sun themselves on the packed-dirt trail until your foot is inches above their fangs, and black bears, ravenous now and prowling for food after hibernation. (Patrick once had to sneak his string under a bear that had climbed out on a tree limb overhanging the trail.) Most of all, he's watching out for those goddamn moose.

"They'll stand in the middle of the trail and won't let you pass, or they'll come charging out of the woods and start goring the mules," Patrick says. Mules are freaked out by moose, so the pack string will erupt, breaking ropes, throwing packs, tearing into the woods in a half dozen directions. Patrick will have to spend the rest of the day rounding them up, then recovering the cargo from the creek or over the cliffside, then splicing snapped ropes and repacking everything.

But we clop along without incident, getting only a minor startle when a pair of bighorn sheep burst from the creekside and bound up the hill in front of us. Patrick quickly *sh-sh-shhh*s the mules and keeps them in formation. By late afternoon, we find the trail crew's campsite. Patrick turns the mules loose to drink and graze while he unwraps the packs and arranges his ropes and gear. He spots a rattler under a rock a few feet from his bedroll. "That was nice," he says. "He gave me a good rattle before I got close so I'd know he was there."

By sunset, the mules have rambled off. Patrick would ordinarily let them graze where they like overnight, but we've got a tough day in the hills tomorrow, so he wants them close at hand for an early start. We finally find them three miles upriver, just as the last light is fading. Once we leave the meadow and enter the forest, we're in total darkness. There's no moon tonight, and Patrick won't use a flashlight, out of courtesy to the mules ("Screws up their night vision"), so we have to feel our way through.

"Walk like a frog," Patrick advises, though I think he means duck. I'm supposed to use the sides of my feet to feel the edge of the path and keep a hand on my forehead so I don't get clocked by branches. I keep stumbling, and I slow down till we're inching along at a crawl. It's going to take us hours to cover three miles.

What I'm really worried about is that creek somewhere dead ahead. If I don't spot it, I'm going to face-plant onto the rocks and have a parade of half-ton animals crashing down on top of me. "Relax," Patrick says. "I'll know we're close," he tells me, when I feel cool air. I don't buy it—after all, we're walking right next to a river—until I notice a damp-basement sensation on my face. I poke my foot a few feet ahead and find the creek bank.

Patrick's fury over the mule's injury is partly because things went wrong, partly because they're going to get worse. It's about this time I realize we could really be in trouble.

We're only a half mile from camp when we get to the other side, and that's when everyone disappears. Patrick hasn't tied the mules together, as he would on the trail, because it's a short trip and they generally will stick close to the lead horse. But now they've suddenly decided to head off on their own. "Hang on," Patrick says, handing me the horse's harness, and then he vanishes, too. Sometimes, Patrick told me, the mules will get homesick for the Big Creek corral and take off on a thirty-mile journey, and he'll have to race after them and try to cut them off. But in pitch dark, I don't know how the hell he's going to find them—or me.

I keep blinking my watch face, hoping he'll somehow spot the little blue flash. Midnight is approaching, and I'm dying for sleep. I recall a story Patrick told me about his first summer as a packer. The last mule in his string had tumbled off a crumbling trail and fallen into the river, and when Patrick scrambled down, he found it wedged and bleeding in a logjam. Patrick had to chop it free with his ax, but the logs were infested with hornets, so he had to keep chopping despite the stings. That was his life for the next few hours: chopping at slippery, bobbing logs, being stung in the face by hornets.

I don't know if it's eyestrain or some kind of weird river fog, but after about an hour, I notice a milky, phantom shape floating toward me. The horse sees it, too, it whinnies like a shrieking schoolgirl, scaring the hell out of me. Then I notice the phantom's pointy ears and hear Patrick's voice saying, "Got 'em!"

Down in North Carolina, everybody knew Jenks Brown. He was big money and old money, a badass and a good ol' boy. Call him opportunistic and he'd say, "Hell, yeah!" See a land deal? Grab it. Big ol' grizzly? Blast it. He was the ultimate antipacker—a trophy hunter and pilot, a real estate developer and Southern gentry—and he died in a plane crash the week before his son turned three.

Ten years later, Patrick's sister sat him down with a scrapbook of news stories and told him what else Daddy did for a living. Jenks, it seems, had a secret life south of the border. It ended abruptly the day he took off from Colombia, copiloting a small plane north over the Gulf of Mexico toward an unlit farmer's field in the backwoods of Tennessee. While attempting a night landing to avoid detection, he and the millions of dollars' worth of marijuana he was carrying wound up smashing into the trees behind the farm. By the time the cops arrived, Patrick read in the clippings, pigs had begun eating his father's corpse.

Jenks's brothers tried to take Patrick under their wing and turn him into a hunter, like the rest of the Brown men, but Patrick quit sport hunting for good at thirteen when he ran out of bullets after gut-shooting a doe and had to strangle her with his bare hands. He gave up hunting but not the hunting trips, bringing a camera into the woods with him instead. He got so good at nature shots that he ended up getting a bachelor's degree in fine arts from Savannah College of Art and Design and a job offer from an art gallery.

But before graduation, Patrick spent his summer vacation backpacking through Yellowstone National Park. He got fed up with all the rules and yahoos and car campers and asked a Park Service ranger where he could find some *real* wilderness.

"Idaho," the ranger replied. The River of No Return wasn't a national park or even a game preserve but 2.4 million acres of wide-open wilderness. If you get in trouble out there, the ranger said, no one will know till they spot the buzzards circling. "That what you had in mind, kid?"

Patrick had figured the ranger would point him to another section of the park, not another state. He was half broke, miles from Idaho, and due back in class in a few weeks.

"Any jobs out there?" he asked.

Nope. But they were taking volunteers. Patrick agreed to do any grunt work the Forest Service asked in exchange for a bag of food and a plane ride into the bush. For his first assignment, he and his trail boss were given acetylene torches and told to dismantle an old gold mine. Patrick got such a kick out of the hike there that he outpaced his trail boss and arrived at the mine alone. The sun went down and still no trail boss. The next morning, a ranger found him miles back—cold, exhausted, and lost. That did it for the trail boss. He was so embarrassed at getting shown up by a punk volunteer, he quit and caught a bush plane home that day.

Patrick, consequently, was field-promoted to supervisor of his own one-man work crew. The Forest Service manager told him to finish the job and hike back to Cabin Creek in ten days, when a bush plane would come for him. Despite the nasty work, Patrick had a blast exploring the area. He was disappointed when the job was finished, but since his food was gone, he hustled back to the airstrip by dawn of the pickup day.

The plane didn't arrive that day. Nor did it show up the next or the next. Patrick spent the week catching fish and snaring wildfowl, wondering what had happened. When a trail crew flew into Cabin Creek six days later, it was surprised to find him. The manager, it turned out, had forgotten all about him. Patrick



"SOMETIMES SLOW AND DIRTY Just feels right," says Patrick, hare hand-shaping a pine log with a drawknife to build a hitching post for his mules. "You think Daniel Boone would have become a legend for running a backhoe?"

shrugged. He never even mentioned it to the manager when he got back to town in McCall.

Patrick got another assignment and was soon back in the woods. He was pushing through a huckleberry patch when he spotted a bear cub. Oh, fuck, he thought. He began looking for the mother, but the mother spotted him first. Patrick heard a roar and knew what he had to do. In *Backcountry Bear Basics: The Definitive Guide to Avoiding Unpleasant Encounters*, it advises this: "Fight back with any weapon at hand, or your bare hands if need be. Fight back as if your life depends on it, because it does. . . . If you don't drive the bear away, it will kill you and eat you." Instead, Patrick leaped in terror. The bear pounced and landed exactly where Patrick had been. Since panic worked, Patrick dove again, this time behind a tree.

The bear kept coming. "She was standing up, poking her face around the tree," he'd later say. "We were eye to eye, and she opened her mouth to let out this horrible, yelling roar that just shook me, snapping her teeth at my face. I could see the huckleberry stains and chewed leaves on her teeth." Luckily, the cub ran down the trail and the mother charged off after it, leaving Patrick too shaken to walk. The nightmares began that night and lasted for years. Patrick would awaken to afterimages of claws and ribboned human flesh.

But he didn't leave the woods, or even ask for time off, which arched the eyebrow of even a tough old cuss like Clem Pope.

After a lifetime in the deep woods, Clem's face follicles don't budge much. The way packers keep score, he's a god. The rankings are easy to figure: It's how long you've served, minus the mules killed on your watch. Clem began packing as an eighteen-year-old greenhorn in Montana, and for the next quarter century he never lost a mule. The packer who replaced Clem, by comparison, was a "helluva smart, hardworkin' fella"—even Clem says so—but in just four years, three of his mules died in accidents. Clem's streak is impressive only until you learn how aggressive he is; then it's flat-out unbelievable. He'd string together fourteen mules at a time. *Fourteen mules!* He couldn't even see the back half of his string. Not since the days of Hard Rock would a packer attempt a convoy that long. Clem was so annoyed by any kind of machinery in his woods that when a smoke jumper called for a helicopter evac, he'd snarl on the radio, "No fucking chopper! I got it."

But that's not to say the Pope never fucked up. He did, and fatally. A couple years after he retired from the trail and became a supervisor in McCall, Clem came back as a favor when a crew needed a packer on short notice. In the middle of a bad bog, one of his mules stumbled into a jagged log and ripped open her shoulder. Clem tried all night to get her down to the trailhead, but she was too badly hurt. At dawn, he hiked down the mountain to borrow a gun, then climbed back up and shot her. Ask him about it now and he feels naked that you know. "It was very hard," he finally says. "You put them into that situation and you have to get them out. When you don't, it's because you did something wrong." End of story. No excuses, no details, just *I slipped up, and she paid for it.*

Rather than making him more human, that fuckup made him more demanding. If the very best in the business couldn't keep mules alive, well then, he'd make sure only the best in the business got a shot. He became so picky that after his replacement quit, he waited two years before hiring another packer for the River of No Return. He did the long jobs himself and gave the short ones to part-timers, all the while keeping his eye out for "not a cowboy, that's for sure. Someone who's patient, and comfortable in his own head, and . . ." Well, he'd know him when he saw him.

Then this Browo kid came along. Son of a bitch was abandoned on his first assignment, nearly mauled to death on his second, but kept coming back for more. Never complained, either. So when Patrick asked if he could ride along to see what packing was like, Clem violated his normal taste for solitude and said what the hell. It was like going solo anyway, because Clem discovered that traveling with Patrick was like traveling with a younger version of himself. The kid had the same sure hands with knots and fetlocks, and the same obsessive drive to master everything in his world.

Patrick also kept his mouth shut, which was good because there was a lot he had to hear. The first thing was the code. Clem's Code. By rights it's really John Henry's code, but Clem adapted it for wilderness use and made it a lifelong principle. It boils down to this: "Anything a machine can do, a man can do better. Especially with a mule." By "better," he means "with more artistry and less destruction," but sometimes he also means "damn quicker" and "a whole lot easier." Chainsaws are great, but factor in mixing gas and oil, lubing chains, adjusting tension, stopping to refuel, and hauling the bruisers out there to begin with, and you might as well have just ripped through the tree with your sharp-toothed single-buck. Besides, what does a man become when his machine breaks down? A babe in the woods.

All this was thrilling stuff for a kid who'd grown up landlocked by Atlanta strip malls. Clem had Patrick stick by his side and learn by watching what Clem called the flow of his hands. To test Patrick's clearing skills, Clem would pick out a dead pine covered in snow and leaning dangerously over the trail with other trees propped against it and say, "Okay, take 'er down." Clem would grab a seat and watch Patrick swing away, never saying a word if Patrick chose an angle that could drop the trees on his head; the boy had better learn to chop or learn to jump. If Patrick could stay cool while having his balls busted, he could deal with anything the mules threw at him.

Patrick ate it all up. He became qualified as a woodlands firefighter, then a primitive-tools expert, even a blacksmith. By the end of his apprenticeship, he was one of the last long-haul packers in the United States—and "no one else is going into the backcountry thirty, forty days at a time," Clem told him. But even as Clem was filling the gap left by Jenks and molding Patrick into the Last of the Old-Time Mulemen, Patrick wasn't losing himself. "I realized it when he showed me his photography," says a former ranger who's worked with Patrick. "It's the same creativity, the same craftsmanship. I think Patrick does this because he considers it art."

Even though we didn't get back from the night hike until well after midnight, Patrick is up by 5:00 A.M., smoking and writing in his journal. His birthday and four-year anniversary with his girlfriend, Rozlyn, are both this week, and Patrick has been struggling a lot over whether it's time to come out of the woods for good, not just for a few months each winter. If Patrick is afraid of one thing, it's that he'll leave the wilderness one day and find he's lost Rozlyn and a life he could have had. "But for right now, this doesn't feel like a mistake," he says. "I don't think I'm a social misfit. I just like being out here."

After he finishes his breakfast, he whistles together the mules. Today we're going to move the trail crew again, this time halfway up the mountain. From there we have a choice: either drop back down and follow the river home, or take the hard way—straight uphill, through the Black Butte mountain range.

The hard way it is. No one has traveled that trail in years, as far as Patrick knows, so he wants to see what shape it's in. The route climbs to nearly nine thousand feet and is covered by snow patches even in summer. The big fire of 2000 left the peaks littered with deadfall and scorched trees, so getting over Black Butte could also take some hard chopping and trailblazing.

"Heads up!" he calls to Johnny Rotten and company, and we start climbing. The first hours are a pleasure, even though we're zigging up steep switchbacks and ascending nearly a thousand feet per mile. When we plateau, we're in a meadow that's so thick with wildflowers, we no longer smell the mules or our own sweat. On the far side, the trail gets steeper and more overgrown, but I don't mind, after a week of feeling inept, I can now take my turn with the ax when we dead-end in a logjam, or scout ahead when we detour to find where the faint trail resumes. I even find a route through a deadwood maze that's easier than the one Patrick picked. "Score one for the apprentice packer," he says.

But when we summit the first ridge, our world suddenly gets freaky. We're surrounded by scorched, skeletal trees, a field of them creaking and whistling so loudly in the wind that they sound like baying coyotes. The crest of the mountain looks like a giant beaver dam, with lodgepole pines tumbled and snarled in every direction. The trees that haven't already fallen crack ominously as we try to hustle past. "Sorry," Patrick apologizes as he pulls his ax out of its saddle holster for about the fifteenth time. "They were supposed to clear this trail two years ago."

He begins hacking into one tree while eyeing another that's swaying right over the mules. We get through and stop a few yards later at a log pile so thick and wide, I don't see any way around without backtracking. Patrick tries to ginger-foot the mules through anyway. We almost make it, until the last mule tangles its legs and upends, whinnying and thrashing amid the jagged logs. Patrick leaps between its flailing hooves and yanks out his knife, slashing the mule's tie rope so it won't pull down the rest of the pack. Then, very tenderly, he kneels and strokes the mule's head until it stops snorting and struggling. Once it's calm, he urges it back on its feet and sees blood staining its flank. Patrick, who, like Clem in his prime, has

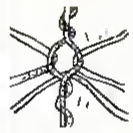
Lessons from a Packer



HOW TO CATCH A WILD GROUSE. When you've been eating freeze-dried chili for four straight days, there's nothing like striding back to camp with a tasty game bird in hand to make your tentmates bug-eyed. Grouse will peck around like chickens and are just as reluctant to fly, so when you spot one in a meadow, slide up as close as you can, then sprint, waving your hands in front of you. The idea is to look like two pouncing hawks so the grouse won't rocket up but will look for ground cover instead. Then just dive and grab, and you're a neck wring away from dinner. If that doesn't work, suggests Patrick, "peg it with a rock."



HOW TO READ A TRACK. The thrill of the unknown is a joy of hiking—until you spot blood on the trail and really big doggy prints. Check to see if the tracks wander about or are straight ahead and purposeful. Unlike a dog, wolves and coyotes are all business. Take a look at the toes. If they're splayed, that's a mutt; close together and parallel, you're looking at lobo. So what's it up to? Check how far the left paws are from the right. When hunting, animals accelerate and their tracks narrow until, at top speed, all four paws are aligned. If you see a deer track as well—you'll know by the center ridge, a sign of hooves—hang back or circle around. Otherwise, you might become an uninvited guest at dinner.



HOW TO TIE A DIAMOND HITCH. If you want a tightly wrapped roof rack that won't shift even in a tsunami, learn to tie a version of the mule-packer's specialty. All you need is five yards of rope, a rack with projecting butt ends, and a working knowledge of a pool table.
1. Knot one end of the rope to the left middle pocket. 2. Toss the long end of the rope over your cargo to the other middle pocket. 3. Loop the rope under the rack and back over the cargo, coiling the loose end around the first length as you go—essentially braiding it. 4. Now here comes your diamond. Leave one really big loop in the middle, then keep braiding. 5. When you reach the starting point, loop the rope under the rack and over to the top left corner. 6. Hook it around the end and pass it back through the diamond to the top right corner. 7. Hook it around and take it through the diamond to the bottom right. 8. Back through the diamond to the bottom left. 9. Back to the starting point. 10. Tie it off with a half-hitch knot and hit the trail. —C. M

ILLUSTRATIONS BY OLIVIER KUGLER

The Hard Way

never lost a mule, is seriously pissed. "Makes me sick when one of these animals gets hurt, and I fucking got them into this shit," he says.

It's about this time I realize we could really be in trouble. Patrick, I sense, has known it for a while, his fury over Johnny's injury is partly because things went wrong; partly because they're going to get worse. It's taken us an hour to go a mile, and the next stretch is even slower; after a half hour, I can still look back and see where Johnny fell. We're losing daylight fast, and we can't camp because there's no water up here and nowhere for the animals to graze. We're just about out of water and food ourselves, all we have between us is a pack of tuna and two tortillas.

With the sun half below the peak of Black Butte, we break through the worst of the dead-tree field, only to hit snow. Most of the time I can crunch along the surface, but I keep coming across hidden sinkholes and falling in up to my waist, ripping my shins and banging my knees on buried logs. My thighs are aching from hours of climbing over deadwood, so I'm having trouble hauling myself out.

The snow gets deeper and spreads wider in every direction, until we can no longer find the trail. Luckily—at least the way Patrick sees it—we're surrounded by wolves. He ties up the string for a bit and ranges around in the snow, and he soon finds wolf tracks heading toward the next ridge. "Wolves will always follow the human trail," he tells me. "Even when it's three feet under snow." Once we hit dirt again, he squats and examines the prints more closely, he's seen some scratchings and wants to make sure we're not going to surprise a nesting mother wolf who's protecting cubs. "No, we're cool," he concludes. "They were chasing an elk." A half mile later—sure enough, we find a gnawed elk leg under some trees.

Then that son of a bitch Knothead, a new horse Patrick is breaking in, abruptly yanks free and takes off, leading half the string in the wrong direction. Patrick has to run a wide semicircle around them and cut them off, then lead them back over the same mess of snow and deadfall we'd just felt lucky to get through. "I am so close to beating the shit out of him for that," Patrick glares when he finally rounds everyone up. Within three strides, he's cool again. "But that would only make it worse the next time."

"How much farther?" I ask. I don't want to whine, but I've got to be realistic, we're hitting the ten-hour mark, and I don't have much left in me. We'd have been out of these mountains hours ago if not for these mules. Can't we just tie them up for the night and come back for them later? They'd be okay, right?

"I don't really know how much longer it's going to take," Patrick says. And then, oddly, he begins talking, more than he has all week. He starts telling me stories about the Ridgerunner, the crazy old fugitive who ran around up here for years in the 1940s before sheriff's deputies finally trapped him, about the separatist too scary for a nickname who stalked around these parts this past spring with an assault rifle, asking everyone, "You wit da gumamint?" and about those three days Patrick spent huddled in a sleeping bag with a concussion and bleeding ears after a dead moose spooked his mules and sent them on a tumble through a boulder field, with him wedged under.

It's dark by the time we get out of the snow and start our descent, and Patrick is still talking. He keeps it up for the next five hours, while we splash through creeks in pitch dark and gradually notice the trail flattening, widening, showing signs of human traffic. Just past midnight, I hear crunching beneath my feet. We've hit the airstrip at Cabin Creek. We made it.

I'm so relieved, it takes me a while to process what just happened. Up there in the snow, when I felt myself running out of gas, I went from mimicking a packer to mimicking a pack mule. Patrick noticed and reflexively took charge, using his voice to show me someone was in command who wouldn't let us down. I'm too whipped to think clearly, but I'm trying, because whatever it takes to be a packer, I know I just experienced it.

The sound of chopping rings out across the meadow way too early the next morning. After I perk and empty the espresso pot twice, I limp down to see what's up. Patrick has his double-sided lumberjack's ax buried in the side of a tree, and a pine is already down beside it. As long as he's back at the ranger station, he figures, he ought to rebuild the busted hitching post.

There's an easy way to do this, of course—have an iron bar flown in and mount it on two cement posts. And there's this way. Patrick is going to haul two trees up to the tack shed, saw off the branches, cut one into posts and the other into a beam, and spend the rest of the afternoon shaping them by scraping them with an adze. If you've never heard of an adze, it just means you were born after abolition, even the simplest adze job takes hours.

"Sometimes, slow and dirty just feels right," Patrick says as he mops the grime and sweat off his face with a T-shirt. "All our heroes did it slow and dirty—that's why they're our heroes. You think Daniel Boone would've become a legend for running a backhoe?"

Before I have a chance to bring up Thomas the Tank Engine or point out that the king of the wild frontier probably considered a wrought-iron broad ax to be pretty high-tech at the time, Patrick hits me with a point that brings me right back to the night before. "It's about patience and persistence," he says, "and being creative without being destructive." Fair enough. Slow and dirty got us out of those mountains.

Patrick seems a little embarrassed by his blurt of earnestness, so I shift the subject. "You going to have the mules drag these over?" I ask. He's told me before how he moves heavy cargo by Indian travois, so I'd like to see how he rigs them up. "Nah," he says, hoisting one of the beams over his shoulders. "They're getting a day off." ■

Last Tango in Cleveland

[*continued from page 203*] tell if he's being sarcastic, but next time I'm in with Tony, I let it go—walk him down, punch my way inside, and enjoy the best round I've ever spent in a boxing ring. I glance over at Bob and he's actually smiling a little.

Never mind that I'm exhausted by the end of the first round. Never mind that Tony takes it to me for the next six minutes. I got my first taste of what it's like to *fight* in there, not just get hit. It tastes fine.

Hey, Bob, I say before I leave the gym, you wanna see a tape of Vonda fighting? I can bring it in tomorrow.

"I've seen her fight," Bob says. "I'd rather *she* watch a tape of you sparring. Haven't you called her yet?"

Look, Bob, the thing is, I don't wanna call her. I'm on a quest. I wanna be tested.

"Oh, no, you don't," Bob tells me. "You do not. Believe me, you ain't gonna like it. *Believe* me. You better give that dame a call."

"You all right?" Bob asks me. "You look sluggish."

I feel sluggish, I say.

"You sleepin' all right?"

I'm sleeping good. All I do is train and eat and sleep. Then I realize that this morning, after Lisa dropped the boy off at pre-K and before I caught the train, we did the nasty. Which I tell Bob.

"*Aha!* That explains it. Whaddya got left, two weeks? Stop that stuff until after you fight."

I thought that was an old wives' tale.

"*What?* Tell me something." When you finished, did you feel like comin' in here? Or did you feel like rolling over for a nap?"

Nap.

"Exactly."

So long, Vonda. I had thought about going to Biloxi for her fight against Ann Wolfe, but I didn't want to break training, and it was supposed to be on Fox Sports. It wasn't, and I went to bed that night, a Saturday, not knowing what went down Sunday morning. Vonda's manager calls from the airport in Biloxi. What went down was Vonda. Hard.

Wolfe nailed her on the chin with an overhand right in the first round and knocked her out—out cold. The ringside doc called the EMTs, who couldn't revive her, either. So they strapped Vonda to a stretcher and raced her to the ER. She'll be okay, but she suffered a concussion and won't be able to keep our date.

Tough call: I can try to survive against Ann Wolfe—the fighter who has just nearly decapitated the previously unbeaten women's heavyweight champ with one punch—or I can try my luck with Kathy Rivers, an overweight bartender from Rhode Island who, in 2002, went eight rounds with Vonda before getting TKO'd.

Hmmm.

I run it by Bob. He votes for Kathy Rivers.

I don't run it by Lisa. If I give my wife a vote, I won't be doing this thing at all.

I run it by God, who sounds just like Bob Jackson, but with a Yiddisheh slant: "Could you be any more of a putz? You wanted omens? How about that dickweed Frankie? The jab in the pisk you ate? Hey, how about that cripple I put on the Penn Station steps—*nisht do gedacht! That's* how you want to end up, a *pretzel*? Nar, listen—it's not a metaphor—a *human pretzel!*"

You can't argue with a perfect being, especially when He's right. But it all boils down to this: I didn't come this far or train this hard to fight a pudgy barkeep.

It's too late to change the posters, which were old-school gorgeous—Vonda "The All-American Girl" Ward versus Scott "Hoo Boy" Raab—but we have the place and the date, and we have the fighter who cut Vonda down, Ann "Brown Sugar" Wolfe.

Then we lose the venue. When Vonda and her manager hear that Brown Sugar's replacing the All-American Girl, they're pissed off—how dare we invite the big stiff's conqueror into the big stiff's own backyard!—and start pressuring the guy who said he'd host us at his gym. They don't have to lean long or hard before he backs down and out.

"You guys'll pack your bags and go back to New York City," he grouses on the phone. "Me, I gotta live here."

I hate speaking ill of my own private Krypton, but that's Cleveland. To hell with charity, sportsmanship, and honor—we're suffering here.

And that's the boxing business, too. So far, I've had to fire a trainer and find a new opponent on short notice; now we gotta scrounge up another place to hold the fight. The only thing missing is a visit from some wiseguy in my dressing room before the fight telling me it ain't my night.

Bob won't be in Cleveland. He has a middleweight on a card that same weekend, in Chicago. So my cornerman'll be Rohnique Posey, a twenty-six-year-old welterweight from Queens, a great kid and a solid young pro—unbeaten in eight bouts—with a smile flashing gold and a tattoo across the cannonball of his right shoulder reading PULVERIZER.

And we find a gym on Cleveland's near West Side willing to host the fight, in the basement of an old abandoned school. The trainer who runs it, Johnny Avon, sounds a familiar note.

"Ann Wolfe?" he barks into the phone. "Yer gonna get kilt!"

Four days before I leave for Cleveland, I'm at a nightclub way out on Avenue X in Brooklyn, watching Rohnique co-headline a card.

Hoo boy. Tagged by a right to the chin, knocked down and groggy, Rohnique bounces up and tries to slug his way out of the first round instead of staying away until the bell. Another right and he's down again—and halfway through the ropes. He climbs back up before he's counted out—he wants to keep going—but his legs are wobbling. The ref puts him in a bear hug and waves it off, a TKO.

It's sad to watch Rohnique get stopped, sadder still seeing him trudge away from ringside with a towel over his head and Bob's beefy arm around his shoulders. I'm home in bed, replaying his loss in my head, when my phone rings. It's nearly 1:00 A.M.

"Scott, man, thanks for comin' out to see me fight."

Rohnique?

"Yeah. Yo, I'm sorry to be callin' your house so late, but I wanted to thank you for comin'."

You all right?

"I'm fine, man. I just messed up in there. I got all macho and shit with the guy—hold on, Bob wants to talk to you."

"Scott?" Bob says. "I'm sorry we couldn't visit with you after the fight. But you oughta know that if you're getting a phone call like this, you're part of the family."

It's a very nice family to be part of, Bob. Thank you.

I hang up with a lump in my throat. Maybe there's no crying in baseball, but in boxing it's okay. In boxing, you *should* cry—it's at once crueler and larger-hearted, more human, than any other sport. All the bullshit's stripped away. The numbers don't matter. Step through the ropes and into the ring and you can no longer hide—not from your foe, and not from the truth about yourself.

The moment of truth. The last moment of truth I can remember facing in Cleveland was my bar mitzvah. Of course, that was 1965—billions of brain cells ago—and Rabbi Rube wasn't going to belt me no matter how badly I botched my haftorah. But I can still feel the waves of fear—they were that intense.

Truth is, this feels worse. My pal Cal Fussman does the introductions. He's wearing a white tux with a gold lamé cummerbund and bow tie. It's funny, I suppose. I have friends here. I guess that's nice. Truth is, I'm too busy trying not to pee my pants to care about any of it. Now I know why fighters pray before the first bell rings—like I am now. Mercy.

I'm a plodder, a frightened plodder. I didn't sneak out of the hotel and scurry back to Jersey. I'm not gonna soil my trunks. But I may start weeping any moment now. I can't hear a thing. Hell, I can barely see.

The bell clears my head. A bit.

I have a three-point plan.

Go forward. Punch straight. Get out alive.

Wolfe, five-nine, weighs 180, not an ounce wasted—she's cut, her biceps big and chiseled. She comes out quick, holding her right hand low. She feints the right and jabs me with her left—three, four, five fast jabs. Then a left hook upstairs. Then a body shot, another left.

Twenty seconds gone. I haven't moved my hands away from my head yet. That body shot hurt. I think she might've moved some furniture around in there.

Truth is, she's faster than anybody I've been in with—by far. Truth is, she's taking it easy on me. Oh, she dug in on the body shot, but it was a left. Her head shots are aimed at my headgear, not my nose and mouth. She's a pro. She's being nice.

Thirty seconds in, I throw a jab, followed by a right cross. The jab is short, the right finds her. She comes back with two rights, then the hook that turns my head, the one in the photo. That's when the ref steps in to give me a standing eight-count.

What are you doing? I ask him. Truth is, I'm pissed off. I know I'm getting knocked around. The whole thing is embarrassing enough without a bullshit standing eight.

She comes back jabbing. I try the right again, but she hooks her left over it before I can land, then shoots a fast straight right. Her hands are low, her eyes fixed on my head. No question. Wolfe can do anything she wants in there. Anything.

And she knows it. She moves back to the ropes; I follow. Instead of throwing, I keep my hands up against my face. Where's the bell? She lands two more lefts downstairs, and when I try to crowd her up against the ropes, she lands a right to my ear and dances out—then turns, gives me four noogies on top of my head, and follows them with a just-for-kicks uppercut.

At the bell, I plod back to my corner.

I don't know if I can hold up, I tell Rohnique.

"Stay close," he tells me. "Clinch."

Good advice. I come out, feint the jab, wait for hers, and throw a right over it. She answers with a four-punch combination in the time it takes for me to jab again. I miss but follow with my right—and it lands. By God, it lands! I move in and grab her up against the ropes, holding tight.

This is my moment of glory—not even a whole moment really—and it's crowned when she turns to the crowd and sticks out her tongue, letting them know that I didn't hurt her. Which means I did. Maybe. A little. I'm pretty sure I did, because after we break, she loads up on a double left, the first to the gut, then upstairs. Then a trio of rights, up and down and up, that literally stagger me—after which she drops both hands, steps up to me, and kisses me on both cheeks.

Truth is, I'm doing the best I can in there, but there's nothing I can do. She's fresh, untested, doing a little Ali shuffle now, winging lefts. Truth is, the feeling of helplessness is far worse than fear or simple humiliation. And where's that fucking bell?

In the course of writing this, I watch the fight tape three times before I think to time the rounds. The first went 2:06. The second lasted 2:37. Hey, Johnny Avon: FUCK YOU.

The best part of the tape is the shot of the front row after the second round. There's my dad, beaming. The camera zooms in, and he stares straight into the lens and does his best Vito Corleone.

"Look what they're doing to my boy," he says in a hoarse whisper.

I come out salty for the third and final round, but what's the use? Wolfe lands a four-punch combination, then backs up, inviting me to follow—she covers herself and waits for me

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Last Tango in Cleveland

to punch—but I decline. No upside for me there, and I have nothing left in the tank—weary arms, spent legs. I'm like a tranquilized bear; all that's missing is the dart in the back of my thigh.

We pitty-pat around. She tries another shot downstairs—she may be trying to wake me up—and it lands low. Nothing intentional, I'm sure, and not, thank heaven, low enough to rattle the jewelry, but I step back, glaring, and the ref warns her.

Finally, finally—at 2:25—the last bell tolls.

First, I'm overjoyed. The quest is done. Yeah, my head hurts and I've got a scrape seeping blood up on my left cheek, and me belly sore, but I'll live. I did it.

When everyone commends your courage, your heart, and your ability to take a punch, you know you've been drubbed. Still, it's nice to hear that folks are proud of me and what I did. My dad. Rohnique. Ann Wolfe—she and I autographed and exchanged the set of gloves we used. "The man with heart," she wrote, "God bless." I can't recall exactly what I wrote on hers. "Thanks for not killing me"—something like that.

But when I wake up the next morning, I'm disappointed. Truth is, I could've done better. I could've thrown more, and harder, shots. Yet the larger truth is that I couldn't possibly have been a contender, certainly not against a fighter of Ann Wolfe's caliber. I didn't throw what I might've thrown simply because I was afraid of her and what she could've done to me if she'd wanted to.

I can live with knowing I could've done better. It's harder to live with the residue of the fear I felt. I feel humiliated by it. Exposed. Unworthy.

I avoid going to the gym. I avoid thinking about going to the gym. I get a call or two from Bob and Rohnique, I figure I'll call 'em back tomorrow or the day after, but I don't.

By the time I get back to Gleason's, a month has passed. I go into Bob's office with the fight tape. We watch it.

"You did good," Bob says when it's over. "I'm proud of you."

Bob, I could've done better. I could've thrown more. I was scared to death in there.

He laughs. "Of course you were scared. Hey, you came in here—no experience, no skills, no wind—and you had five weeks. You did the work. You didn't complain. You got in the ring with her and did the best you could. You should be proud."

He's right. Scared is scared. Truth is, you can't write it away. You step back into the ring and learn to fight your way through the fear, or you go back to your house and your wife and kid and look back on the thing you did with a measure of pride and a lighter heart, because in the end it was a good thing to do.

Either way, you live with it. Either way, you climb those stairs. ■

Fiction

[*continued from page 163*]

ber written on the bookmark, had never rented the room on East Tenth Street to a Dan Havel and could not remember ever having met someone by that name. But fortunately for the investigation, she happened to be a person, as are many people, addicted to nostalgia and sentimentality. She had been saving all of her calendars and appointment books for more than twenty years now and liked to begin each day by looking back at what she had done exactly ten years earlier. Even seemingly mundane memories—coffee with a friend now living far away or dead, or even something not as pleasant, such as a visit to the dentist—could make rise in her a swell of emotion so intense that some days it brought her to tears, depending on what was happening in her life at present. In her 1988 calendar, she turned to December 19 and saw that she had met with three people that day—two women, whose faces she could not recall, and the man she ended up renting to, though only briefly, whose name was Greg November, and whom she described as . . . But I stopped reading at this point, as I do at any point in any article when I fear that I am about to learn information I do not want to know.

But do you see how I still suffer for Greg November? Do you see how easily the story of my death becomes the story of *his*?

Let me finish the story of my death and why I am no longer afraid.

Our return to the factory several weeks ago was arranged by a TV reporter and a congressional candidate. It was determined that Greg November's death had been a murder and that the group of men responsible were involved in a wide range of criminal activities and were linked to the torture of dozens of people, including the November Fifteen, in an abandoned factory a few hours north of the city.

A young man and woman came to my house early in the morning. The man washed and trimmed my hair; the woman did my makeup. The man dressed me in a shirt and tie and gray pants and then said black pants would be better, and the woman said, "Yes, it will give off more of a funereal vibe," and the man gave me a darker tie, too, and the woman said, "Perfect." With gels and creams, the man sculpted my hair to look messy, and then he did my eyebrows while the woman filed my fingernails. It was as if I really were a statue. I could not speak, and I moved only when they moved me—he to shave my neck, she to add more color to my cheeks.

They put me in front of a mirror and held a mirror behind me so I could see myself from behind, and my wife said, "You look wonderful," and then said to the man and woman, "He hasn't looked so alive in months. He's been under the weather." My daughter came into the room and said, "Your hair doesn't look like your hair," and began to cry, and that was when I knew there was hope for her.

They gave my wife a red dress, my daughter a blue skirt and blue blouse and black boots; the man did their hair, the woman their makeup.

A limousine came to pick us up. Inside were a cameraman and the TV reporter whose idea all of this was and the assistant to the congressional candidate who financed the memorial they were driving me to. The reporter asked me questions, but I did not answer her, and my wife said, "I think he's too moved to speak right now." The reporter asked my daughter how she felt, and my daughter replied that she liked her new boots and could she keep them when the day was over. The assistant to the congressional candidate, a young man wearing a bow tie, kept smiling at me. When his cell phone would ring, he would be angry and curt with who I assume were his assistants and chipper and apologetic with who I assume was the man running for Congress, whose name only later I found out was Ed Coronado.

The outside of the factory—because I had never seen it before now—brought back no memories for me; it was a fairly nondescript rectangular building that elicited in me no more depression than any other building of its kind would. What made my hands shake more than they normally do was the familiar sound of the limousine's tires rolling over the gravel path leading from the main road to the factory. A banner at the end of the gravel path read THE NOVEMBER FIFTEEN—SO THAT WE MAY NEVER FORGET. Past the banner, closer to the factory, were tables upon which were programs including the day's events and a narrative beginning with our abduction from our homes two years earlier and concluding with the death of Greg November and the findings of the subsequent investigation. Also on the tables were individually signed photographs of each of the November Fifteen (I later discovered that there was a signed photograph of me, though I had never signed any such photograph) and calendars with special pullout sections in November to mark the anniversary of our torture. Standing behind the tables were men in suits and women in skirts passing out programs and making sure everyone received complimentary buttons and bumper stickers that read THE NOV 15 LOVE ED CORONADO. At the main entrance to the factory was a plaque bearing the names of the November Fifteen, followed by WERE BROUGHT TO THIS SPOT TO ENDURE SUFFERINGS NO HUMAN BEING CREATED IN THE LIKENESS OF GOD SHOULD EVER SUFFER AND WHICH THIS MEMORIAL WILL ENSURE WILL NEVER BE FORGOTTEN. Coronado's assistant moved me next to the plaque, and someone took my picture. Once I was inside the factory, my memories of having been there did not come back to me as I suspected they would; it no longer looked the same. The broken windows had been replaced with new larger ones that allowed in more light, so that people could better see the various plaques placed throughout the factory to memorialize the places where individual members of the November Fifteen had been tortured and killed. ON THIS SPOT WILLIAM RUDDIN ENDURED AN ORDEAL THAT CONSISTED OF REPEATEDLY DUNKING HIS HEAD UNDERWATER TO THE POINT OF ALMOST DROWNING HIM, A METHOD DEVISED IN . . . ON THIS SPOT MATTHEW DALUISO BREATHED HIS LAST . . . et cetera. There were hundreds of people walking around the main room of the factory, some taking pictures of their families in front of the plaques. Children played hide-and-seek in the side rooms. Somehow I had lost my wife and daughter, who were whisked away from me for a ceremony involving the families of the survivors, which included a photo op with Ed Coronado. I remember shaking many hands and even touching the heads of small children. People spoke to me, but I did not hear them. I must have spoken back to them, but I don't remember anything I said. There was wine and cheese and fruit, candy for the children, the buzz of people talking and laughing. Through loudspeakers along the walls of the main room, I could hear the music that news programs had been using as the theme music for anything to do with the November Fifteen, which started with the percussive beat of something dire and ended with the sad pull of strings. Then there was a hush, and Ed Coronado began his speech. I never actually saw him, I looked where the other people were looking, but they were looking at the speakers from which his voice was coming. His speech, though I don't remember much of the content, was filled with peaks and valleys of inflection—a somber tone followed by a more passionate call to action followed by a tone of serious reflection followed by more passion followed by a moment of silence followed by a rousing conclusion, after which people applauded and then began clapping in unison to the more upbeat music playing through the speakers. Some people were dancing; I think I saw my daughter dancing. And then the crowd, still clapping, formed a circle around something covered with a tarp. Slowly the circumference closed in on what was covered. I was ushered inside the circle along with the other survivors. Breathing was no longer involuntary. I kept having flashes of what I might see when the tarp was removed, though, as in the first moments after waking from a dream, what I saw in my mind was hazy, just beyond the reach of my knowing what it was. After a countdown from ten, the tarp was pulled up, and I saw then what had been in my mind. We were all there, even Greg November: we would live forever. I caught a glimpse of me among the sixteen statues. I wanted to turn away but could not. I was more afraid than I had ever been, but I knew that from this moment forward I would be afraid of nothing. The people kept pressing in on me; I felt as if I would be crushed by them. I closed my eyes and waited, but nothing happened. When I opened my eyes, they had passed me; they had not even seen me. People stood near the statues, which were on a platform, with their hands over their mouths. The music ended, then started again. Children stood on their toes and reached, but the statues were too high. One child who had lost her parents—a girl, maybe nine, I could not be sure at that point—pointed to the statue of me, pulled on my pants, and said, "Mister, excuse me. Mister, can I sit on your shoulders, please, just for a little bit, so I can touch?" ■

Case Against Bush

[*continued from page 183*]

Scenario typical of the 2000 campaign. While debating Al Gore, Bush tells two obvious—if not exactly earth-shattering—lies and is not challenged. First, he claims to have supported a patient's bill of rights while governor of Texas. This is untrue. He, in fact, vigorously resisted such a measure, only reluctantly bowing to political reality and allowing it to become law without his signature. Second, he announces that Gore has outspent him during the campaign. The opposite is true: Bush has outspent Gore. These misstatements are briefly acknowledged in major press outlets, which then quickly return to the more germane issues of Gore's pancake makeup and whether a certain feminist author has counseled him to be more of an "alpha male."

Having gotten away with such witless falsities, perhaps Mr. Bush and his team felt somehow above day-to-day truth. In any case, once ensconced in the White House, they picked up where they left off.

In the immediate aftermath and confusion of 9/11, Bush, who on that day was in Sarasota, Florida, conducting an emergency reading of "The Pet Goat," was whisked off to Nebraska aboard *Air Force One*. While this may have been entirely sensible under the chaotic circumstances—for all anyone knew at the time, Washington might still have been under attack—the appearance was, shall we say, less than gallant. So a story was concocted: There had been a threat to *Air Force One* that necessitated the evasive maneuver. Bush's chief political advisor, Karl Rove, cited "specific" and "credible" evidence to that effect. The story quickly unraveled. In truth, there was no such threat.

Then there was Bush's now infamous photo-op landing aboard the USS *Abraham Lincoln* and his subsequent speech in front of a large banner emblazoned MISSION ACCOMPLISHED. The banner, which loomed in the background as Bush addressed the crew, became problematic as it grew clear that the mission in Iraq—whatever that may have been—was far from accomplished. "Major combat operations," as Bush put it, may have technically ended, but young Americans were still dying almost daily. So the White House dealt with the questionable banner in a manner befitting a president pledged to "responsibility and accountability." It blamed the sailors. No surprise, a bit of digging by journalists revealed the banner and its premature triumphalism to be the work of the White House communications office.

More serious by an order of magnitude was the administration's dishonesty concerning pre-9/11 terror warnings. As questions first arose about the country's lack of preparedness in the face of terrorist assault, Condoleezza Rice was dispatched to the pundit arenas to assure the nation that "no one could have imagined terrorists using aircraft as weapons." In fact, terrorism experts had warned repeatedly of just such a calamity. In June 2001, CIA director George Tenet sent Rice an intelligence report warning that "it is highly likely that a significant Al Qaeda attack is in the near future, within several weeks." Two intelligence briefings given to Bush in the summer of 2001 specifically connected Al Qaeda to the imminent danger of hijacked planes being used as weapons. According to *The New York Times*, after the second of these briefings, titled "Bin Laden Determined to Attack Inside United States," was delivered to the president at his ranch in Crawford, Texas, in August, Bush "broke off from work early and spent most of the day fishing." This was the briefing Dr. Rice dismissed as "historical" in her testimony before the 9/11 Commission.

What's odd is that none of these lies were worth the breath expended in the telling. If only for self-serving political reasons, honesty was the way to go. The flight of *Air Force One* could easily have been explained in terms of security precautions taken in the confusion of momentous events. As for the carrier landing, someone should have fallen on his or her sword at the first hint of trouble. We told the president he needed to do it: he likes that stuff and was gung-ho we figured. What the hell?, it was a mistake. The banner? We thought the sailors would appreciate it. In retrospect, also a mistake. Yup, we sure feel dumb now. Owning up to the 9/11 warnings would have entailed more than simple embarrassment. But done forthrightly and immediately, an honest reckoning would have earned the Bush team some respect once the dust settled. Instead, by needlessly tap-dancing, Bush's White House squandered vital credibility turning even relatively minor gaffes into telling examples of its tendency to distort and evade the truth.

But image is everything in this White House, and the image of George Bush as a noble and infallible warrior in the service of his nation must be fanatically maintained, because behind the image lies . . . nothing? As Jonathan Alter of *Newsweek* has pointed out, Bush has "never fully inhabited" the presidency. Bush apologists can smilingly excuse his malopropisms and vagueness as the plainspokenness of a man of action, but watching Bush flounder when attempting to communicate extemporaneously, one is left with the impression that he is inarticulate not because he can't speak but because he doesn't bother to think.

George W. Bush promised to "change the tone in Washington" and ran for office as a moderate: a "compassionate conservative," in the focus-group-tested sloganeering of his campaign. Yet he has governed from the right wing of his already conservative party, assiduously tending a "base" that includes, along with the expected *Fortune* 500 fat cats, fiscal evangelicals who talk openly of doing away with Social Security and Medicare, of shrinking government to the size where they can, in tax radical Grover Norquist's phrase, "drown it in the bathtub." That base also encompasses a healthy share of anti-choice zealots, homophobic bigots, and assorted purveyors of junk science. Bush has tossed bones to all of them—"partial birth" abortion legislation, the promise of a constitutional amend-

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Case Against Bush

ment banning marriage between homosexuals, federal roadblocks to embryonic-stem-cell research, even comments suggesting presidential doubts about Darwinian evolution. It's not that Mr. Bush necessarily shares their worldview; indeed, it's unclear whether he embraces any coherent philosophy. But this president, who vowed to eschew politics in favor of sound policy, panders nonetheless in the interest of political gain. As John DiIulio, Bush's former head of the Office of Community and Faith-Based Initiatives, once told this magazine, "What you've got is everything—and I mean everything—being run by the political arm."

This was not what the American electorate opted for when, in 2000, by a slim but decisive margin of more than half a million votes, they chose the other guy. Bush has never had a mandate. Surveys indicate broad public dissatisfaction with his domestic priorities. How many people would have voted for Mr. Bush in the first place had they understood his eagerness to pass on crushing debt to our children or seen his true colors regarding global warming and the environment? Even after 9/11, were people really looking to be dragged into an optional war under false pretenses?

If ever there was a time for uniting and not dividing, this is it. Instead, Mr. Bush governs as if by divine right, seeming to actually believe that a wise God wants him in the White House and that by constantly evoking the horrible memory of September 11, 2001, he can keep public anxiety stirred up enough to carry him to another term.

Understandably, some supporters of Mr. Bush's will believe I has bor a personal vendetta against the man, some seething resentment. One conservative commentator, based on earlier remarks I've made, has already discerned "jealousy" on my part; after all, Bush, the son of a former president, now occupies that office himself, while I, most assuredly, will not. Truth be told, I have no personal feelings for Bush at all. I hardly know him, having met him only twice, briefly and uneventfully—once during my father's presidency and once during my father's funeral. I'll acknowledge occasional annoyance at the pretense that he's somehow a clone of my father, but far from threatening, I see this more as silly and pathetic. My father, acting roles excepted, never pretended to be anyone but himself. His Republican party, furthermore, seems a far cry from the current model, with its cringing obeisance to the religious Right and its kill-anything-that-moves attack instincts. Believe it or not, I don't look in the mirror every morning and see my father looming over my shoulder. I write and speak as nothing more or less than an American citizen, one who is plenty angry about the direction our country is being dragged by the current administration. We have reached a critical juncture in our nation's history, one ripe with both danger and possibility. We need leadership with the wisdom to prudently confront those dangers and the imagination to boldly grasp the possibilities. Beyond issues of fiscal irresponsibility and ill-advised militarism, there is a question of trust. George W. Bush and his allies don't trust you and me. Why on earth, then, should we trust them?

Fortunately, we still live in a democratic republic. The Bush team cannot expect a cabal of right-wing justices to once again deliver the White House. Come November 2, we will have a choice. We can embrace a lie, or we can restore a measure of integrity to our government. We can choose, as a bumper sticker I spotted in Seattle put it, SOMEONE ELSE FOR PRESIDENT. ■

Case for Bush: LaHaye

(continued from page 178) Owen. Both are highly qualified and have received the highest possible rating from the American Bar Association. One would have expected liberals to seize the opportunity to advance the cause of minority and women's rights by confirming these two exceptionally qualified people. Yet both of these worthy nominees have been blocked by filibusters organized by Senate Democrats!

Since Supreme Court judges are not elected, it was originally the intent of the Founding Fathers to let the president, who is elected by the people, appoint them. This method ensured that the people had a voice in the process of selecting federal judges. But that has all changed now. Liberal senators have a new weapon to derail qualified judicial appointments and thus subvert the will of the voters. Their weapon, of course, is character assassination, and their targets are all nonliberal judicial appointees.

Liberals know that if conservatives ever gain a solid majority in the Supreme Court, the continuing romance with socialism that has characterized the liberal agenda for the last sixty years may be over. Governmental intrusion into religious affairs will end. Freedom will return to our public schools, so that parents can have a real voice in the education of their children. A mother's womb might once again become a safe haven for defenseless, unborn babies. And most important, God can once again be reverenced and honored in our courts and other public places instead of being barred, so that each individual can have the freedom to worship or ignore Him, as he so chooses.

All of which leads me to conclude that just electing a president who shares conservative values is not enough. Now, thanks to Senator Kennedy, we must also elect a majority of conservatives to the U. S. Senate so that the president's judicial appointees can be properly confirmed.

Such a task is not all that difficult. All we need is 10 percent more of the evangelical Christians in this country to vote on Election Day. We don't need to tell them specifically *whom* to vote for. (Some consider that illegal.) We must simply urge them to vote for the presidential candidate and senator who best share their moral values and principles. In most (but not all) cases, that will be the Republican candidate. Bush, for example, has already delivered on his promises to cut the discriminatory tax on marriage, reduce taxes in general, and defend the traditional view of marriage as being between a man and a woman. He may not be perfect, but he has already proven that he will appoint conservative constructionists to the most important court in the world and will stand behind them until they are confirmed.

The soul of America is truly at stake in the next presidential election. The direction America travels in the next decade will depend on how the majority of Evangelicals, Catholics, Jews, and other religiously committed citizens vote on Election Day. Their fellow countrymen who don't identify with any particular religious group but who love their country and would like to see their children raised in a morally sane society must also join with them in protecting America's freedoms through participation in the voting process. Voting for the most morally committed candidate for any political office is now more important than ever, and 2004 could turn out to be the most important election year yet for this, the greatest nation on earth. ■

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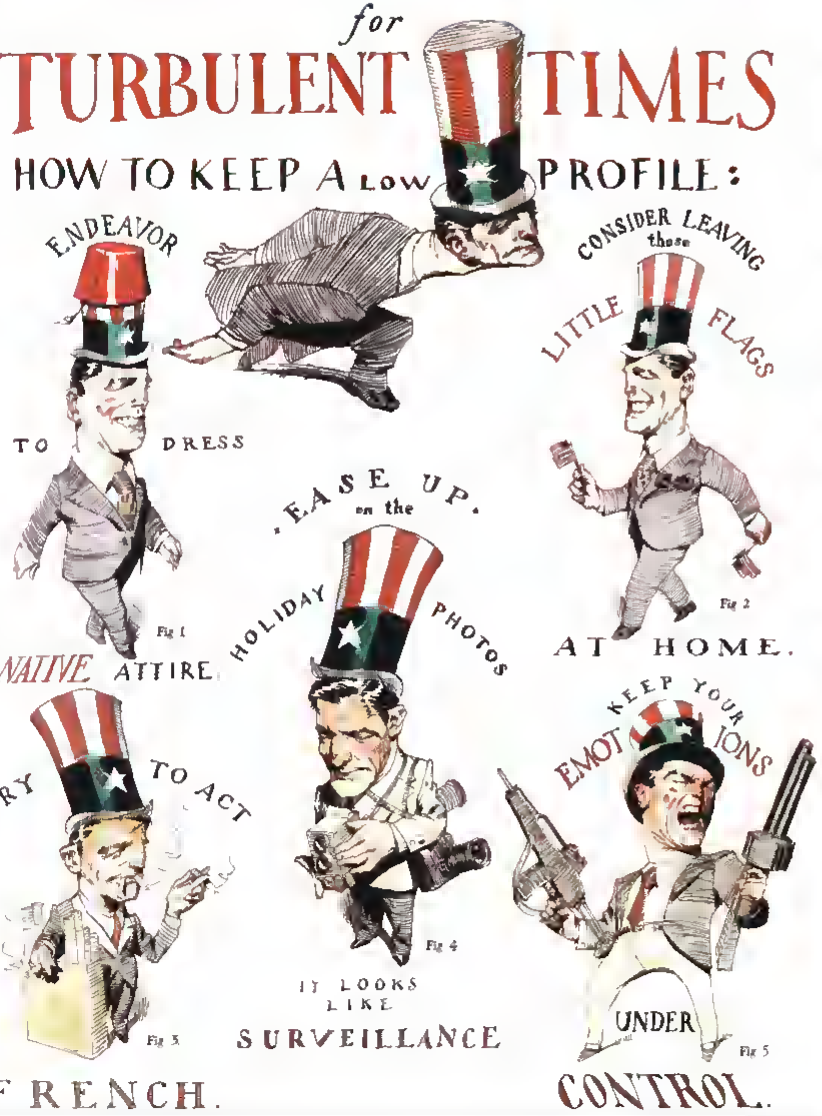
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